

Pluck and Luck

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 64.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 23, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

A POOR IRISH BOY; OR FIGHTING HIS OWN WAY. BY CORP. MORGAN RATTLET.



The door was flung open and four men with blackened faces dashed out at us. The dog made at one of them, but he was flung aside and stretched on the ground.

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A POOR IRISH BOY:

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BY CORP. MORGAN RATTLER.

CHAPTER I.

HAIL TO COLUMBIA.

Can I ever forget that bright May morning when I stood on the deck of the emigrant ship, and caught a first good glimpse of America?

"Oh, how light was my heart as we sailed up through the Narrows toward the city of New York, while I kept gazing on the green fields and pleasant-looking villages on Staten Island," I said to myself.

"Sure, and it is a fine country entirely, and I know there'll be no more starvation and misery for us all."

How I did gaze in wonder on the countless masts above in harbor, on the almost numberless buildings of the great, and on the steamboats plying to and fro on the rivers and the bay, while I again muttered to myself in rapture:

"Surely this must be the greatest country in all the world, and it is no wonder that the people in it should fight so bravely to drive the English tyrants out."

Although I was only a poor ignorant Irish greenhorn of thirteen at the time, I had heard enough about the history of America to know that the brave people had a long struggle for freedom, and the names of such great men as Washington, Jackson and Franklin were familiar enough even in the cabins of Ireland.

Yes. I was very ignorant and very green, indeed, as I could barely read very simple words of one or two syllables, and I had not attempted writing good or bad.

My father was only a poor laborer in Ireland, and goodness only knows how he raised money enough to bring us to America, as I am certain that he did not have a dollar in his pocket when we landed at the Castle Garden on that fine May day so many years ago.

There was my mother and my little sister Mary, who was a bright little girl of eleven at the time, as well as myself, and I was a pretty strong, rough lad of thirteen, with nothing that I could boast of except I was a great appetite.

The well-fed boys of America will scarcely believe that there were hundreds and thousands of little fellows in Ireland who were hungry all the year round, and that too in a country

which produced more than double enough of nourishing food to supply the entire population.

Many of the boys and girls who will read these adventures of a poor Irish boy will scarcely believe him when he tells them that he never ate meat in Ireland except at Christmas and Easter times, and his father and mother could tell the same truthful story.

However, I wouldn't trouble you about such things now only to show you that I had good reason to be proud and happy on the day I first landed in America, although I had my own heart-aches and struggles, and a terrible up-hill fight thereafter.

My father was a strong, able, tall man, of forty, with plenty of sound common sense, for one so ignorant, and he was not at all afraid of hard work.

I did hear that he was a very passionate man in his early days, and that he got into a bad scrape on account of his temper; but however that may have been he was always warning me about giving way to passion, and so was my good mother as well.

That mother was one of the kindest and gentlest creatures that ever came from old Ireland, and my little sister Mary was just like her.

It was said that I took after my father, as I would have been quick-tempered enough only for the warnings and the lectures I got, and they did serve to curb me a good deal.

"Well, we were landed safely at the big Castle Garden, and my wonder kept on increasing at the strange people I saw there from other parts of the world, and they jabbering away in such outlandish tongues.

As we had no friends or near relatives to go to we put up at a poor lodging house in Greenwich street, near the Battery, and I remember that my mother sold some blankets to pay for our first night's supper and lodging.

Poor as we were we were all happy enough, as my father knew that he would soon get plenty of work and good pay, and I was hopeful of being able to find something to do also.

Early on the following morning I strolled out alone into the Battery, but I didn't go far before I found a lot of little rascals running after me and crying:

"Will you look at the little greenhorn, fellers? I say, Paddy, how many ships brought you over?"

The little rogues said a great deal more to me besides, and they kept pelting me with old potatoes and mud, but I kept on my way as if not pretending to mind them, thinking of my father's and mother's advice, and fearing to get into a row on my first morning in the fair land of America.

I suppose "greenhorn" must have been written on every feature of my face and in the ragged clothes I wore, as every boy and girl I met called me either "Paddy" or "Mick" as loud as they could, and they kept on pelting me until I was almost bursting with passion.

I kept my temper, however, as well as I could, and strolled down to the edge of the water to feast my eyes on the great ships and steamboats passing in and out, while I said to myself:

"I wonder what they are making fun of me for at all, the little rogues, for they act to me as if I was some wild animal."

The words had scarcely passed in my mind when an ugly black rogue, a good deal bigger than myself, with a small box flung over his shoulder, made a dart at me and tore the old cap from my head as he cried:

"Can you swim, Pat?"

I looked at the rascal for a moment or two, and my temper was rising a little as I said to him:

"I'd have you to know, bad cess to you, that my name isn't Pat at all, for it is Dinnis."

The rogue before me and three or four others like him burst out laughing at this and then one of them cried:

"Did you twig him, fellers? His name is Dinnis. Make him swim out, Jim."

The big fellow who held my old cap then flung it out into the water, as he cried:

"If your name is Dinnis swim out after your hat."

When I saw my poor cap floating away out with the tide, every drop of blood in my body began to boil, and I sprang at the big fellow with the box as I cried:

"You thief of the world, I'll send your caubeen after it in a jiffy."

I did manage to give the feilow a good box in the face with one hand while I grabbed his hat with the other.

He let fly back at me in fine style, and he sent me flat on the ground as he cried:

"Give me up my hat or I'll knock the very life out of you."

I held the old hat tight in my hand, and as I sprang to my feet again I flung it out into the water as far as I could, as I cried:

"I'll swim after my own hat, but may the mischief take me if I'll bring yours back at all."

The tide was in at the time, and the water was deep enough, but that didn't trouble me, as I had learned to swim in the old river in Ireland, and away I struck out after my old cap.

Then such yelling fell on my ears as I never heard before, as a lot of the roguish boys and other people gathered above on the side of the water, while one of the young rogues cried out louder than the rest:

"His name is Dinnis, and he is taking a swim after his old hat."

Whether it was that the water was strange to me or that I was weak from not having anything to eat that morning, I couldn't tell, but I do know that I was soon as faint as a dying cat, and I gasped for breath before I sank into the deep water.

The next thing I knew I found myself lying at the bottom of a boat and a big man over me holding a bottle of whisky to my mouth as he said:

"He is coming around now, but he had a close shave of it. Thunder! will you look how he grabs the old hat so tight yet?"

Sure enough, I had my own old cap tight in my right hand, and when I recovered my senses enough I clapped it on my head as I said to the man above me:

"Thank you, kindly, sir, for dragging me out of the water and for giving me the whisky; but oh, it was very pleasant in there for all."

I didn't know then that I was near drowning, and that the pleasant feeling that came over me was the sensation felt by people when dying in that manner.

When the boat touched land again a big policeman caught my shoulder and shook me in a very rough manner as he said to me:

"What did you want to go in to swim there for, you thundering greenhorn?"

"It was after my old cap I went," said I, "but the mischief took me if I caught the other rogue's."

Just then a bright little lady about my sister Mary's age ran up to me and put something into my hand as she said to the policeman:

"I saw it all, officer, and it wasn't his fault. Those nasty Italian bootblacks abused him dreadfully, and one of them hung his hat over."

"Come here, you, Edna," cried a shrill voice, as a tall lady with a sallow face sprang at the little girl and dragged her away.

The policeman then asked me my name, and where I lived and all about me, and of course I answered him, like the honest boy that I was.

He then took me to the lodging-house, where my father and mother and sister were waiting for me in great glee.

My father had just hired himself to a contractor to go to work on a railroad some fifty miles from the city, and we were all to start up that very day.

On opening my fist after the policeman left us, what should I find there but a new silver dollar, and then I knew that it was the nice little lady who put it into my hand when she told the policeman that I wasn't to blame for going into the water.

Although I must say that I was a little ashamed of having taken the money from the little lady, it was a great godsend at the time, and as I held it up in my hand I said to my mother.

"It was a little angel who gave me that, and I only pray that I may live to see the day that I may be able to do her some service in return for it."

I don't know how my father managed to get us all up to the village of Middleville, near where the railroad was being built, but I do know that in two or three days after we were settled there in a little cabin, and he was working away as happy as possible.

As I was a stout lad for my age at the time, and pretty tall as well, I looked around the village for something to do, but it wasn't easy for a poor little greenhorn to get employment, as I was not able to take a man's place on the railroad.

My sister Mary soon went to a small school in the village, while I turned to and worked at digging and cultivating a small patch of ground at the back of the cabin.

My mother could read a little, and Mary was not long at school before she commenced to give me instructions in spelling and reading.

After some time I became able to read books and newspapers, and then I discovered that I had a great taste in that way, as I would devour everything in the shape of news, history and poetry that came in my way.

My father's wages enabled us to live very comfortable indeed for people who were not accustomed to the luxuries of life, and a year went by in our new home as happily as possible.

During that time I managed to get some odd jobs from the people in the village and the farmers in the neighborhood, and I could have got a place to live out altogether only that I hated to leave my humble home and the dear ones who were so fond of me.

In addition of being fond of history and poetry, I also delighted in reading about the great men of America who had risen to wealth and fame from being poor boys like myself, and I often wondered if it would ever be my fortune to make

a successful fight in the battle of life, and become like one of them.

I read about Frinklin who was once only a poor printers' boy, and who afterwards became honored by the great people of France when he went there as a representative from his own country.

I read about the poor Irish peddler who carried his pack around on his back for years, and who afterward worked his way up until he became the greatest dry goods merchant in New York city, and built stores on Broadway that were actually marble palaces in themselves.

Then I thought about the presidents and statesmen who were only tailors, and rail-splitters and poor mechanics in their young days, and I would say to myself:

"Sure we have all the same chance in this fine country if we are only true, and honest, and steadfast, and why shouldn't I fight my way up as well as they did? The great General Jackson, who beat the English at New Orleans, was only the son of a poor Irish emigrant like myself, and if I have patience and courage, I may make my mark in this great country also."

In all those bright dreams of youth, and even while passing through the desperate struggles of life thereafter, I always blessed my stars for having found a refuge and a home in the land of freedom and plenty, and I must say that I never regretted the hour when I stood on the deck of the emigrant vessel and exclaimed:

"Hail to Columbia, the land of the free!"

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST OPENING.

After living a year in the country, the brogue on my tongue was as thick as the day I landed, and I didn't attempt to hide it or improve it at all, as I had sense enough even then to know that I would only make myself more ridiculous by attempting to give it a Yankee polish too soon.

Nothing has ever been more sickening to me than the attempts of Irish boys and girls at putting on the Yankee twang when they are only out here a short time, and if they only knew how ridiculous it appeared, and how they were laughed at by those they imitated, they would take full time in getting rid of their accent.

While the young people in the country village were not quite as impudent as the young rogues in New York city, the boys in the village ridiculed me about my brogue often enough, and I almost became ashamed of my name when they would call out after me, crying:

"He's a Mick, but his name is Dinnis."

I did get out of temper once or twice, but I was very sorry for it afterward.

Once I had a fight with a chap about my own size, and while we were wrestling together he fell under me and broke his right arm.

My father gave me an awful talking to that night, and the boy's father was going to have me put in jail, but the brave lad himself swore that I wasn't to blame at all, and he wouldn't let them trouble me.

I had good reason to know and to love that lad thereafter, as he turned out to be the best male friend I ever had in my life for a stranger.

So that you may not forget his name I will tell you that it was Marcus Townsend, and he was the son of the richest man in the village.

He was about three years older than myself, although he wasn't much bigger than me when we first met, as he hadn't commenced his full growth at that time.

Well, I kept on working at what I could find for two years more, and during that time I kept devouring all the books and papers I could lay my hands on.

When I was sixteen years of age, I was a very poor scholar so far as school-books went, but I had a very good notion of history, and of the news, and of the great men of the day, while my ambition to become rich and famous was growing stronger and stronger.

I couldn't do a simple sum in division at that time, and I couldn't parse a single sentence in grammar, but I could tell you all about the great battles fought in the revolution and in the war of 1812, both on land and sea, and didn't I glory in such American heroes as Washington, Putnam, Marion, Commodore Perry, and Paul Jones.

I also took great pleasure in reading about the great battle-fields of Europe, and of the victories of the great Napoleon; and when I thought of the wrongs of my own poor land I often prayed that I might live to have a chance to strike a blow at the English tyrants.

When I was about sixteen years of age I got a job as an errand boy in the leading grocery store of the village, and it was then it came home to me that I had wasted my time in reading stories and histories, when I should have been practicing at writing and at figures.

When I was only a few days in the grocery store the boss asked me to add up some simple accounts, and I grew red with shame when I was compelled to admit that I didn't know enough about figures to do it.

He wasn't a very harsh man, but he was provoked at me at the time, and he abused me soundly, calling me an "ignorant Irish fool," and so on.

When I went home that night the tears were in my eyes, and I told my mother all about the trouble, and she consoled me by saying:

"It isn't too late to learn yet, Dennis, and Mary will teach you all she knows."

My gentle sister did commence with me that very night, and it was after twelve before we went to bed, while my head was fairly bursting with figures.

Early on the following morning I was sent up to the academy outside the village with a load of groceries.

I might as well confess just here that my three years' life in the country didn't put much polish on me and that I was still almost as rough in my accent and in my manners as I was on the day when I first landed at Castle Garden.

My reading may have improved my mind and instilled me with patriotic hopes and worthy aspirations, yet "greenhorn" was still imprinted on my features, and it came out in almost every word I uttered.

The Middleville Academy was a great institution in the neighborhood, as it was not only patronized by the richest people in the village, but it also contained about forty boarding scholars from the large towns around.

As I drove up to the large building I saw a lot of boys playing ball out on the fine field, and I said to myself:

"What a fine thing it is to be a scholar, and to live and get your schooling in such a grand house as that."

While I was meditating, a voice behind me cried out:

"Catch it, Paddy."

I knew that the boy was speaking to me, but I didn't know what he meant at all, and the next thing I knew a hard ball struck me on the back of the head and knocked me sprawling over on the horse.

I tell you, I saw stars for a moment or two as I rolled off the horse down on the ground, and I could hear shouts of laughter from the boys all over the field.

I then picked myself up as well as I could, got up on the seat as soon as possible, and drove the horse on to deliver the load, while I could hear the boys crying:

"Paddy is a regular muff!"

"Wouldn't he make a good short-stop!"

"His head is as hard as a nigger's!"

My head was aching hard enough, but I never once looked back at them, as I said to myself:

"I suppose I would be just as bad as them if I was one of

themselves, but I would like to have a crack or two at the rogue who struck me with the ball."

As I was taking the things into the kitchen of the academy a nice little young lady came out to the wagon and said to me:

"Did those cruel boys hurt your head much?"

I couldn't reply for the life of me, as it seemed to me that all the blood in my body rushed up to my head when I remembered the sweet face before me.

It was the nice little lady who gave me the silver dollar on the Battery three years before, and she was taller and more lady-like and far prettier than she was when she first appeared to me like an angel.

When I didn't answer her at once the young lady stamped her foot impatiently as she said:

"Why don't you answer me, sir? Did that nasty ball hurt you much?"

"Not at all, miss, thank you," I stammered, dropping a box of tea on the ground at the same moment.

The box fell on a big flag, when it burst open and out went the tea in every direction.

The young girl laughed at my mishap, and ran into the house, crying:

"What a clumsy Irish fellow he is."

I stooped down to pick up the tea, when a sharp, shrill voice fell on my ears from the window, crying:

"Put that tea back in the wagon again, you clumsy Irish fool, and tell Mr. Poole to send me up a fresh box by some one else. Tell him also that I will not trade with him any more if he sends you up here."

I don't know how I managed to drive back to the store that day, as the boys hooted and fired the ball at me again on my return, in addition to my being burning all over with mortification and apprehension.

I did tell the groceryman the truth, however, and he discharged me on the instant, saying:

"Go home and get a job at digging pototoes, Dennis, as I can't afford to lose my best customer by keeping you in my store any longer."

The pay wasn't much in that store, but oh, how bitterly I did feel for all that, as I trudged home to the little cabin.

We had very poor luck during the previous winter, as my father was taken with the fever and he could not work for five months.

He was at work again at the time, but we were heavily in debt at the grocery store, and I was helping to pay off that debt with my labor.

My good sister was only fourteen years old, yet she went out to work every day taking care of two children in the village, returning to our humble home every night to give me instructions in writing and figures.

When I told my mother about the accident and my discharge she consoled me by saying:

"Don't trouble yourself, my poor boy, as the summer is coming now and there will be work for you on the farms about here. When winter comes again you can study under Mary, and you will be a good scholar, with the help of goodness, before you are many years older."

I started out to look for work on the following morning, but I didn't meet with any success.

It was late in the afternoon, as I was returning to the cabin again, when I saw a nice light wagon drawn up before the door, and I said to myself:

"Who in the mischief is it that comes in a coach to see us at all?"

My heart was beating fast enough as I walked into the little cabin, but it beat faster still when I beheld a tall, stern-looking gentleman seated in our little best room talking to my mother, and by that gentleman's side was the sweet little lady who was the cause of the accident that made me lose my place in the grocery store.

The gentleman cast a frowning glance at me as I entered the

room, while the girl smiled in a playful manner, as she said in her sweet tones:

"This is the boy, father, and I am sure you will like him if you give him a chance."

It then came out that the gentleman was Professor James, manager and proprietor of the Middleville Academy, and that the young girl was his only daughter.

Edna James had heard that afternoon that I was discharged from the grocery store on account of breaking the tea box, and she insisted on her father paying us a visit to offer me a very humble position at the academy.

My mother had told them before my arrival about my taste for reading, and she also informed them that I was very stupid at writing and figures.

The professor then said that he wanted a strong boy to work around the academy and to take care of his two horses.

Soon after I entered the room he turned to me, saying:

"I have just made your mother an offer, and it is to this effect: If you will come to me and work for a year for your board you will have a chance of learning something, as I will get one of my assistants to give you private instructions two or three evenings in the week. At the end of a year, if you prove yourself worthy, I will give you a chance as a pupil in one of the lower classes, providing you tend to the horses, split wood, and do errands before and after school hours. What do you say to the offer, boy?"

I didn't like the offer at all, and simply because I didn't like the man; but before I could make him an answer, Edna James gave me one of her sweetest smiles, while my mother said:

"He is very anxious to improve himself, sir, and I know that my Dennis will be a great scholar yet if he has the chance."

The words from my kind mother, as well as the smile from the sweet young girl, caused me to accept the offer on the instant, and I said:

"I do want to become a scholar, sir, and I am willing to work from morning till night to get the chance."

On the following morning I packed my scanty wardrobe in an old carpet bag and trudged out to the Middleville Academy.

The first real opening in life was presented to me, and I embraced it eagerly, little dreaming of what I would really have to endure in the rugged road before me.

And yet, as I look back now on my early days, with all their trials, and pains, and sufferings, would I not face the rough path again under the same circumstances?

I would, and eagerly at that.

CHAPTER III.

SWEETS AND BITTERS.

My first opening in life did not present many pleasant scenes, as it was toil from early morning until late at night, with only a slight glimpse of home life and a few kind words from Edna James to cheer me now and again.

I didn't complain at the hard work, and I don't now, as it made me rugged and strong, and it helped to increase my good appetite.

I can't complain of the food I received at the academy, as it was good enough and there was plenty of it, while it would be nonsense for me to grumble about having to eat with the servants, for wasn't I a poor servant myself?

I wasn't many days in my new situation before I made two fast friends.

The first of these was a big, strong, lazy nigger, who acted as porter, coachman and stableman.

The boys called him Ajax, and I couldn't tell to this day if he had any other name.

I got into the good graces of this big negro by doing more than half his work in the stable, and by discovering the soft side of his nature as well.

That soft side was a dusky damsel of thirty-five who was the head cook in the establishment, and who had hitherto regarded Ajax with great scorn.

Although the big negro was fearfully down on the "low Irish," he soon declared that I was a good boy, and that he would knock the head off of any one who would dare to insult me.

My other friend was a big mastiff dog called Lightning, and who was the terror of the wicked boys in the academy.

If the old saying is to be relied upon to the effect that dogs and children take to good-natured people, I must have been gushing over with that quality, as I never met a dog or a child yet that I couldn't make friends with.

Lightning was kept as a watch dog, as he was set loose around the premises after eleven at night, and woe be to the boy who would attempt to steal out of the building after that hour.

Before I was three days at the academy I found out that Professor James was a tyrant in discipline, that he was hated by all the boys, and that he was a fearful task-master to those under him.

He was a stern, overbearing, sullen man of very few words, and no one could approach him on friendly terms except his young daughter.

Mrs. James was a fit mate for her husband, as she was harsh-spoken, severe, and even cruel also, in her treatment of those under her, and from the very first day I could feel that she had taken a particular dislike to me.

Most of the boys treated me with great contempt and rudeness, and many were the tricks played on me during the first six months spent in the institution.

Professor James appeared to forget all about his promise of giving me private instructions, as none of the assistants offered to assist me in that way, but I did not despair, and I managed to study a little, on retiring at night, in my little bedroom over the stable.

Lightning was also attached to the big negro, who took him around with him wherever he went.

One night Ajax went to the village to attend a negro dance, taking the dog with him, and I was left alone in the room over the stable.

The boys of the academy had never attempted to play any tricks on me during the night, as I was protected heretofore by Ajax and Lightning, and I did not apprehend any trouble that night.

Ajax always slept in the same room with me, and the big dog would be with us when he was not set loose about the premises.

On the night in question I was seated at the table studying an arithmetic by the light of a small lamp when I heard a knock at the door below, and then a voice called out:

"Am you up dar, Dennis?"

"To be sure I am," I cried, thinking that it was Susan, the big fat cook, who was calling me.

"Missus wants you right off," cried the voice again.

Dropping my book, I hastened down-stairs, little dreaming of any mischief, but I had scarcely gained the door when a big bag was flung over my head and several rough hands were laid on me, while a voice hissed into my ear:

"If you attempt to call out your name will be Dennis and no mistake."

Half stifled as I was and terrified as well, I recognized the voice on the instant, and I knew that I was set upon by Well Rogers and his gang.

The boarders in the school were divided into two factions, who were always at open war in all their games and pastimes as well as in the mimic and real fights which took place between them.

The leader of one of the gangs was a big, strapping fellow whose name was Wellington Rogers, and who was called Well by his schoolmates.

Well Rogers was the son of a big, blustering Englishman

who owned a hat factory at the end of the village, who was noted for running down everything American, and who was an intense hater of everything Irish as well.

The son was very much like the father in his prejudices and as he was a big, strong fellow, and very handy with his fists, he was looked upon as the bully of the school.

The big bully had often insulted and abused me, but as he was a head taller than me and a splendid boxer I didn't dare turn on him.

Besides, even if I was his match, my father and mother were ever preaching humility to me and I knew myself that it would never do for me to get a bad name by fighting with the boarders in the institution.

I knew that I was in for it that night, but I didn't attempt to call out, as I was almost stifled by the way in which they pressed the bag around my head as they dragged me away from the stable.

They then dragged me along down a path leading to a deep pond, and the next thing I knew I was flung into the muddy water, which was cold enough to make me shiver to the bone on that chilly November night.

I couldn't tell how long I was in when they dragged me out again, but I do know that I was nearly half drowned and stifled with the bag on my head.

I then heard the rush of several feet followed by cries of defiance and rage, and I could realize that a fight was going on around me.

It then occurred to me that some of the rival gang had rushed to my assistance, but before they could effect my rescue Well Rogers and his crew flung me into the pond again.

As I had felt the sensation of drowning before, I knew what was coming on me then as my senses left me while I was powerless to strike out, as the big bag was tied down over my arms.

When I did recover and open my eyes, I found myself lying in my little bed over the stable with Marcus Townsend and two or three other boys standing around me.

Marcus Townsend was the boy whose arm I had broken two years before, and he had grown to be a fine fellow of over eighteen, and one of the best scholars in the academy.

Marcus was the leader of the village boys attending the school, and he was also captain of the base ball club composed of his schoolmates who were only day scholars at the academy.

When I fully recovered my senses, my rescuers asked me if I knew who flung me into the pond, and I hesitated some moments before I answered:

"How could I tell when they made a blind man's fool of me the minute they got me down-stairs."

Marcus Townsend then begged of me to report the affair to Professor James, but I refused, saying:

"I had rather not be a tale bearer, sir; and whoever it was who served me that trick I will be even with him some of these days."

I didn't even tell Ajax about the affair, as I feared that he would take summary vengeance on Well Rogers, who was far from being a favorite with the big negro.

Three or four days passed away and I didn't say a word about the ducking I got, but I suppose Well Rogers could see by my black looks that I had it in for him, as he gave me to understand that he hated me, and he continued to heap insults on me every time we chanced to meet.

The big bully was also the captain of his base ball club, and they played a very exciting game against Marcus Townsend's nine a few days after.

Although I had a lot of work to do, I managed to steal out among the spectators to watch the game which was very close and exciting to the end.

Marcus Townsend was the last one to handle the bat on his side, and he made such a splendid run that it decided the game in his favor.

A great shout went up from the spectators over the victory

and I fairly jumped for joy, flinging my cap in the air as I cried:

"Hurrah for the boys of the village, and Marcus Townsend forever!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I got a box in the ear that sent me reeling sideways, while a rough voice cried.

"Get out of here, you Irish beggar! What right has such a flannel-mouth as you to come among young gentlemen?"

It was Well Rogers who thus assailed me, and all the Irish blood in my body boiled at the moment as I thought of how he had treated me, but I kept my temper as well as I could, and only replied:

"I may not be a gentleman like you, but if I was your match or your equal you wouldn't dare to hit me that way."

The big bully had a bat in his hand at the moment, and he sprang at me with a cry of rage as he yelled:

"Take that, you infernal Irish Mick!"

The heavy bat caught me on the side of the head, while at the same moment a piercing voice from one of the windows in the academy rang out on my ear, crying:

"Shame—shame, you great coward!"

I didn't hear or know any more after that, as the blow given me by the big bully knocked me senseless on the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

MY BRAVE YOUNG CHAMPION.

The cowardly blow with the bat given me by Wellington Rogers knocked me senseless for some instants, and when I did recover the back of my head was quite sore and numb, just as if I was paralyzed there.

Some of the boys had raised me from the ground, and they were bathing my head with water as I stared around and muttered aloud:

"That was a false blow, and it was a great coward who gave it to me."

"Cheer up, Denny," said one of the boys helping me, "as you will be all right soon."

Feeling a little ashamed of myself for giving way under one blow only, and hating to make what is called a scene, I roused myself as well as I could, and looked around me as if in search for the one who had knocked me down.

I then saw Well Rogers talking to Marcus Townsend in very angry tones, and they were both surrounded by a lot of boys.

At the same time I saw Professor James coming towards us from the academy, and I hastened away to the stable, feeling that I had no right to be out in the ball grounds at all at that time.

I couldn't tell you how bad I felt as I sat down in the stable and thought of the way in which I had been treated by Wellington Rogers.

The pain in the head was nothing to me, and it was going away very fast, but the load on my heart was heavy enough, and I groaned aloud:

"Oh, can I bear it much longer, and must I always keep my temper down when imposed on by such rascals as that cowardly Rogers."

I was so indignant that the blood mounted to my face and I felt like suffocating, but I thought of my father and mother and cooled down a little as I said to myself:

"If I ever want to get along in the world I must curb my temper, or maybe I would be tempted to kill one or two such fellows as that big bully; but don't I hope that I will be his equal and his match some day, and then won't I give it to him."

While I was thus ruminating and striving to curb my evil passions, Ajax, the big negro, came into the stable and looked at me with pitying eyes as he said to me in very gentle tones:

"Did dat big loafer hurt you very much, Denny?"

"Not very much, as I am all right now."

"Is you able to walk, sonny?"

"To be sure I am Ajax."

"You look mighty white about de gills, but you's better come an take a walk with dis chile."

As the kind-hearted negro spoke he seized me by the arm and raised me to my feet, while he continued:

"Don't feel bad, Denny, as you'll be all right 'fore you is twice married."

I was compelled to sigh a little as I replied:

"I hope to be all right before morning. But where are you taking me to now?"

"Over to de kitchen first, and den down to the grove to see de mill."

I stared up at the big negro as he led me over toward the kitchen, and asked:

"Sure, and are they building a mill down in the grove without me knowing it?"

The big negro laughed heartily before he replied, in merry tones:

"In course dey be. When Susan gib you something good we'll go right down and see dem putting up dat mill."

The negro laughed heartily again.

Susan, the fat cook, did give me something very nourishing in the shape of a glass of good wine, and it put new life in me for the time.

I had become somewhat of a favorite with the cook also, and she wanted to insist on me taking a second glass, but Ajax took it out of her hands and drank it himself, chuckling merrily as he said:

"Too much is no good for de lad, and I drinks to your good health, Susan."

Still holding me by the arm, Ajax led down toward the grove, and I could perceive that several boys from the academy were moving in the same direction in twos and threes.

It was drawing to six o'clock in the evening when we reached the grove, and I was looking around for the new mill as I said to Ajax:

"I don't see them putting up any building about here now, Ajax."

The big negro grinned from ear to ear and pointed to a group of boys as he replied:

"Dey are just agoin' to lay de foundation stone, Denny, and we'll just draw in here and see how dey will do it."

He then drew me in under the trees, from whence we could see what the boys were doing without their being able to get a glimpse of us.

I had scarcely taken my stand to watch the proceedings, when I turned to the big negro in great surprise, saying:

"Why, Ajax, it is going to fight they are, as I see Marcus Townsend and Wellington Rogers squaring off before each other."

The big negro chuckled and grinned and cast a patronizing glance at me, as he replied:

"Yous hit it, Denny. Dat's the mill dey am agoin' to put up, and no mistake."

My heart rose to my mouth on the instant, as I realized that Marcus Townsend was going to fight for my sake, and I said to the negro:

"It isn't fair at all, Ajax, as I know that Mr. Townsend is going to fight for me, and I ought to be able to fight my own battles. I'll go out at once and stop it, and take the place before the bully myself."

The big negro grabbed me by the shoulder and shook me rather roughly, as he replied:

"Don't be a blame fool, Denny. You's ain't big enough for dat big chump, but you may be one of dese days. Just keep still and watch de mill."

I did keep still, but my heart was bursting the while, as I was afraid that Marcus Townsend was not a match for the big

bully, and that the brave and generous boy would get a bad beating for taking up my quarrel.

I couldn't attempt to describe the fight, as every pulse in my body was bounding as it went on, and I know full well that I felt the big bully's blows more severely than Marcus Townsend did.

The two boys were about equally matched in height and strength, but Wellington Rogers was the mischief at boxing, as his father had been giving him instructions in that science ever since he was a little fellow.

Oh, how my heart ached and how my blood did boil as I saw my brave champion getting knocked down over and over again, and I would have sprung out several times only the big negro held me fast, saying:

"Keep still, you blame fool, and I'll bet my boots dat Massa Townsend will lick him yet."

At that moment I saw Wellington Rogers giving my brave friend an awful blow that stretched him on the ground again, and I couldn't stand it any longer.

Bursting away from the big negro I dashed out into the fighting ground before Marcus Townsend could get up, and I stood before young Rogers with my hands unlifted, as I cried out:

"I'll have at you, you big Turk, and you won't kill Mr. Townsend while I am to the fore."

"Bully for Denny!" cried one of the boys.

"He's no match for Rogers," cried another.

The big bully scowled at me for a moment or so, and then cried:

"Didn't I give you enough before, you flannel-mouth Mick, or do you want me to knock the hair off of your teeth now?"

I was about to spring at the big bully as a reply, when I felt myself caught from behind and flung back, while a voice cried:

"I am not half licked yet, Rogers. Stand aside, Denny Driscoll, and let me fight this out."

It was my own brave champion, Marcus Townsend, who thus faced his big opponent again, and at it they went, hammer and tongs, while the big negro caught me in his arms and put me up on his shoulder, as he cried:

"You keep still now, Denny, or I fling you ober de mill. I'll bet my boots dat Massa Townsend knocks de spots out ob him yet."

The tide of the battle did change at the moment.

I couldn't describe how Marcus Townsend turned the tide for the life of me, but I do know that he soon knocked the big bully silly.

Then I sprang down from the big negro's shoulder, and I ran to grab my champion's hands and I kissed them over and over again as I gasped forth:

"May I live to see the day that I will be able to fight as bravely for you, Marcus Townsend, and may I never have a day's luck in this world if my heart or my hand fails me then."

The boys on the side of my champion cheered him to the skies, while the big bully's friends brought him to as well as they could.

I'll never forget the look that Well Rogers gave me and Marcus Townsend as he turned away with his friends, as he cried out:

"I'll fight you again, Mark Townsend, and as for that Irish Mick I'll make it hot for him, you can bet all you are worth."

Ajax hurried me back to the stable, saying:

"You just look out fur dat rascal, Denny, as he am a bad one for suah."

The big negro was a sensible fellow, and he gave me some sound advice.

He told me that old Rogers was a big man in the neighborhood, and that he had influence enough to get his son off without much punishment even if he had injured me severely.

Ajax also informed me that old Rogers held a large mortgage on the academy, that he could foreclose any day, and that Professor James was therefore at his mercy.

When I understood the situation I said to the friendly negro:

"Then I suppose it would be best for me to clear away at once, Ajax."

My friend rubbed his woolly head and grinned ere he replied:

"I spects you will have to do dat, Denny, but bust my boots if I wouldn't stick on an' fight it out if I was you."

"Then I will stick on and fight it out, Ajax, as I have made up my mind to be a good scholar and make my way in the world."

The kindly fellow clapped me on the back heartily as he replied:

"Dat's the talk, sonny."

I was doing a power of thinking at the moment, and I abruptly said:

"I understand you are a great boxer entirely, me fine fellow."

Ajax was tickled at the compliment, and he chuckled with delight ere he replied:

"I guess dis chile is some wid de gloves, Denny, and no mistake."

"I'll tell you what I will do with you then."

"What am dat, sonny?"

"If you will teach me how to box I'll show you how to read and write, and I'll make love to Susan for ye in the bargain."

Ajax chuckled again and gave me a sly dig in the ribs as he cried:

"You's a smart rogue, Denny, if you is Irish. What's your notion in being a boxer?"

"To fight Well Rogers, of course, as I am bound to have it out with him some day as sure as I live and am half able."

The big negro grabbed my hand and shook it warmly, as he replied:

"Dat am a go, Denny. You just fix it wid Susan for dis chile, an' I'll post yous on de box, so dat you ken knock the spots out of young Rogers fore you is six months or a year older."

The bargain was made then and there.

I won't say that I neglected my other studies at the same time, as I had made up my mind to surprise some people in more ways than one.

I afterward learned that Edna James saw Well Rogers striking me the wicked blow with the bat as she was watching us from the window, and that she wanted to have the cruel bully expelled from the academy, but she was kept in check by her parents.

In order to keep faith with Ajax, I commenced giving him instructions in reading and writing, but I must confess that I was not a good schoolmaster, as he did not make much progress.

I had better success with Susan, however, as I managed to put in so many good words for my big dusky friend that the fat cook consented to become his wife at Christmas, and we had a great time at the wedding.

You may be sure I didn't forget my brave champion either, and though I didn't have much chance to repay him, I was never tired of singing his praises at home and abroad.

As the months rolled by my prospects didn't improve very much.

I won't trouble you by telling you all I endured until spring set in again, but it may be well to know that Professor James and his wife worked me like a slave from day to day, and that Wellington Rogers sought every chance of insulting and abusing me.

I didn't make any complaints to my father and mother, as they had trouble enough at home.

My poor father was taken sick again in the winter, and only that he had a little saved for a rainy day it would have gone hard with them.

My good sister was out as a servant in the village, and she gave almost every cent she earned to my mother.

It was into poor Mary's ears that I poured all my sorrows, and she would always encourage me to persevere, saying to me:

"Try and bear it all until you become a good scholar, Denny, and then you can face the world and fight your way to the top rank."

My father was only two weeks out of his bed when he went to carrying the hod for a bricklayer in the town, who was putting up the building for old Rogers.

He was weak enough, and unfit to do the work at all, but he struggled on until the close of the day.

About that time the big Englishman went around inspecting the work; my father happened to be carrying a load near him when he stumbled and fell, throwing the bricks all over.

One of them struck Rogers on the leg, and he commenced to swear at my father like fury, calling him all manner of ugly names, and declaring that he wouldn't have such a clumsy Irish scoundrel employed on his building any longer.

My poor father couldn't stand the abuse, and he gave back some talk, when Rogers made at him and struck him a blow that knocked him down into the cellar.

The poor man was lifted out insensible and taken to his home, while the English bully marched off crying:

"That's the way to settle with the infernal Micks who give you impudence."

I didn't hear about the bad business for some days after, and then it was young Wellington Rogers who ran across me in the stable and taunted me about it, crying:

"My old man knocked thunder out of your Mick of a father, Irish, and I am able to do the same with two such fellows as you are."

If I had known the real truth I am certain that I would have pitched into the fellow at the moment, but I kept my temper and I turned away as I only replied:

"I suppose you could, but it is no credit to you or to your father either to be beating those who are not your match."

I went home that night to find my father in bed with an ugly cut in his head, and then I learned the whole truth.

Can any one blame me for making a vow that night, that I would have satisfaction on old Rogers and his son just as soon as I was able.

As if to add to my rage, when I was on my way back to the academy that evening, I met my sister Mary in the street of the village with the tears in her eyes.

Mary was a nice-looking girl of fifteen at the time, and she was very womanly for her age.

When I asked her what was the trouble with her, she wouldn't tell me at first, but I soon made her confess that a loafer had insulted her in the street.

Then I found out that the loafer was no other than young Wellington Rogers.

You may be sure my blood was boiling when I went back to the stable that evening, and I would have gone in search of the young rascal at once only Ajax held me back, saying:

"Yous just keep still longer, Denny, and den I givs you de word to let fly at de loafer."

Ajax did begin a peculiar course of training that very night, and I have since learned that it was a very sensible one, while being wholesome as well.

Although I was becoming confident in myself as I advanced in learning, I was as humble as ever, and I bore all the insults heaped on me by the boys of the academy with great patience.

I was also respectful to Professor James and his wife, although the latter often provoked me to fling up my job and clear away.

Three objects held me fast, however, and I kept on until I was a year at the academy.

The first was my great regard and ambition for Marcus Townsend, who was secretly aiding me in my lessons.

The second tie was my ambition to become a scholar, and to surprise Wellington Rogers with my learning and with my powers as a fighter.

And the third loadstone that drew me to the Middleville Academy was little Edna James.

Although I became somewhat intimate with Marcus Townsend, I never told him about my practicing with the gloves under Ajax, and the big negro alone was in that secret.

CHAPTER V.

ACCUSED OF A CRIME.

It was about the first of June that something occurred which caused me to get into an ugly scrape.

A gang of burglars had been committing some mysterious robberies in the neighborhood at the time, and among the other houses broken into in the village was that of old Rogers.

The blustering fellow made a tremendous fuss about his loss, and he swore that the burglars had taken two thousand dollars that he had to pay his hands on the following day, and the bricklayers as well.

He also swore that the robbers made off with a lot of bonds as well as his watches and jewelry, and he declared that he would be in a bad fix if he didn't succeed in recovering some of his loss.

It then became rumored around that some one in the neighborhood was in with the burglars, and that no stranger could spot out the houses plundered by them with so much secrecy.

I wasn't at all pleased to hear about the robbery at Rogers' house, as my spite didn't tend that way.

To tell the truth I only thought of paying father and son back in their own coin, and I had sense enough to know that it wouldn't do me any good to hear of their being beggared for life.

I was also sorry about the people working in his hat factory, and the bricklayers on his building, as old Rogers made the robbery an excuse for not paying off his hands on the Saturday evening following, when two weeks' pay was due.

The first thing old Rogers did was to go down to New York for a smart detective, and he then offered a good reward for the recovery of the bonds.

In the meantime I want to tell you that young Wellington Rogers continued to make love to my sister Mary, and that he almost troubled the life out of her by forcing his company on her whenever he could.

I didn't hear about that until after, and I didn't know that the young rascal threatened to crush and ruin me if she didn't consent to marry him on the sly.

I did hear, however, that Marcus Townsend got into another row with the young bully about some young girl, and I strongly suspected that it was Mary they fought about.

In any case, it pained me to hear that Well Rogers got the best of my friend the second time.

On the third day after the robbery at Rogers' house the old man and his son came up to the academy with the New York detective.

I didn't pay much attention to them at first, as I was busy with Ajax in the stable, but when I saw them all coming over to us I said to the negro:

"Can it be that they suspect either of us about the robbery, Ajax, as young Rogers has mischief in his eye and no mistake take."

The negro looked out at those approaching him, and he grinned as he replied:

"If dey spects dis chile fur a robber dey is mighty much mistaken."

Before we could say any more the three of them were on us in the stable, and the detective fixed his eye on the big negro, as he asked:

"Where do you live?"

"Right thar in de house, sah."

The negro had not been sleeping in the room over the stable

with me since he married the cook, as himself and his wife occupied an apartment at the top of the academy building.

The detective then turned his eyes on me, and asked:

"Where do you live, young fellow?"

I pointed up-stairs as I replied:

"Up there, sir."

The man looked very sharply at me again, and he then inquired:

"What is your name?"

"Dennis Driscoll, sir."

"Have you a sister who lives out as a servant next door to Mr. Rogers here?"

"I have, sir," I promptly replied, little thinking to what his inquiries were tending.

"Did you go down to see her last Friday night?" he then asked.

I reflected a few moments, and I did remember that I paid a visit to my sister on the night of the robbery, so I replied:

"I was down there that evening, sir."

"How late did you stay?"

"Until after ten o'clock."

"Can you prove that you returned to the stable soon after ten o'clock?"

"I suppose I can, sir."

"Who saw you then?"

I was puzzled to reply, as I could not remember that I had met any one in particular on my way back to the stable that night.

Young Wellington Rogers then whispered some words to the detective, and he nodded and looked up-stairs before he said aloud:

"I will tend to that. You stand here by the door, and your father and I will go up-stairs and search the premises right off."

Young Rogers took his stand by the door and drew a revolver and pointed it at me as he cried:

"If you offer to escape, you Irish thief, I will lay you out on the instant."

I was so dumfounded that I didn't know what to say, but my black friend became highly indignant, and he spoke right out, saying:

"It's a blame shame to kuse Denny here ob de robbery, 'cause I know that he am as honest a boy as dey makes 'em in dis world."

Old Rogers turned his head as he was mounting the stairs, and cried, in his blustering tones:

"Shut up, you black rascal, as you may be in the same boat with that Irish thief."

I was so dumfounded at the charge made against me that I couldn't open my lips if one single word would have saved my life at the moment.

Wellington Rogers kept sneering at me and pointed the pistol at my head, as if he would be only glad of a chance to shoot me at the moment.

I really think that he would have fired at me if I had moved a step or raised my hand against him.

I couldn't tell how long the others were up-stairs, but when they did come down again the detective held a gold watch in his hand and looked at me with terrible eyes, as he cried out:

"Where did you get this, Driscoll?"

I looked at the watch and then at old Rogers and his son as I burst out into tears, crying:

"As heaven is my witness, I never saw it in my life before that I know of."

A cry of exultation burst from young Rogers, and he sprang at me to grab me by the shoulder as he cried in savage tones:

"I knew he was the thief, and that his sister was in with him in the game."

If I was certain that death awaited me the next instant, I couldn't keep still at the moment, and I was near enough to being put out of the way forever, goodness knows.

With a savage cry I sprang at the young rascal and struck

him a blow in the face with all the strength and fury that was in me, as I cried:

"You lying dog, my sister and I never did wrong in our lives, and I am certain that it was you put the watch up-stairs."

The blow laid Wellington Rogers flat on the floor and the pistol went off at the same moment.

Then an awful yell burst from Ajax and he fell on the floor also, crying:

"I'se a dead nigger."

I suppose I must have lost my senses at the time, for I was mad enough to dash out of the stable as fast as I could when I should have stood my ground and faced my accusers like a man.

I could only think of flying, however, as it struck me on the instant that I would have no chance against old Rogers and his son, and that they would send me to prison for many years for a crime I never committed.

Away I dashed down toward the grove where the fight had taken place, and after me ran the detective and old Rogers, the former crying:

"Don't fire at him, sir, as I will soon run him down, you can bet."

The man was in his prime and very active, but he did not know whom he had to deal with then.

As I was in splendid condition in every way, and fit to fight and run for my life, I made great time in reaching the grove, while old Rogers kept yelling as he fell far behind the detective:

"Fire at the young scoundrel and bring him down before he escapes."

The detective had called on me several times to stop or he would fire, but I kept on for dear life, as I said to myself:

"I am lost if they catch me, as I know that I would stand no chance against such rogues."

Even while I was thus plunging on in a great state of excitement, I began to realize that young Rogers had formed a plot for my destruction, and that it would be almost impossible for me to get out of the scrape if I were once caught.

Whatever chance I had at all against them would be by remaining at liberty, I imagined, and away I went, even when the detective commenced to blaze away at me with his revolver at last.

As I was enough of a sportsman to know that it was hard to hit a flying mark, I kept on through the grove and then out on the fields beyond, when I could hear by the shouts of the boys that they were hurrying from the ball ground to hem me in if possible.

Some of the boys could run like fury, as I knew full well, and I was also aware that they wouldn't desire any other sport than hunting down a poor wretch like me who was accused of robbery.

Don't imagine that I blame the boys, for of course they thought that I was guilty when they saw me flying, and I suppose that I would have given chase myself under the same circumstances.

As I dashed along I could see that the boys were closing on me, and I noticed that Marcus Townsend was leading in the chase.

Making a turn to the right, I started away again so that they couldn't head me off, and when I looked back soon after I still noticed that my brave champion of other days was still in the lead, with the detective second after him.

Then I heard a voice crying out to me:

"Hold on, there, Denny, and let me know what is the matter with you."

After measuring the distance between Marcus and the detective, I did hold up a little, and my friend was soon beside me, saying:

"What are you running for, Denny?"

"I am accused of robbery, sir."

"But you are not guilty?"

"I'll swear I am not."

"Then why do you run like a fool?"

"Because the Rogers will clap me into prison forever."

"Nonsense, Denny. Just stand your ground, and I'll see that you get justice. Remember that my father is a lawyer and he will defend you."

As the brave lad spoke he caught me and held me back until the detective came upon us, crying:

"Hang the fellow, but he runs like a race-horse, and no mistake. You are my prisoner."

The man was about to clap a pair of handcuffs on my wrists when Marcus Townsend interfered, saying:

"Don't degrade the boy in that way, sir, and I'll guarantee that he will go quietly with you."

As he spoke he took my arm within his own, while the detective replied:

"All right, young man. I don't want to put them on if I can help it."

A lot of the boys came up at that moment, and old Rogers was with them, puffing and blowing.

Without waiting to draw breath the big bully rushed at me and struck me in the face with great force, as he yelled out:

"Take that for daring to hit my son."

I fell on the ground from the blow, and I could hear the detective crying:

"That's not right, Mr. Rogers, and you mustn't do it again while I am here."

"Mr. Rogers," cried Marcus Townsend, "I must tell you that you are a coward to strike a prisoner that way, and I will denounce you for it."

The big bully glared from the detective to the young man as he blustered forth:

"To the mischief with your denouncing, you young cur, and I'll get my son to drub you again."

I sprang to my feet as soon as I could, and my heart was bursting, as I cried:

"Mark my words, sir. I'll make you and your son pay for this treatment before long."

I then turned to the boys, and the tears were in my eyes as I said to them:

"Boys, boys, may I never live to see my father and mother again if I am not innocent of the charge they bring against me now, and the truth will soon come out."

The detective had seized my arm to take me along back, while the boys shouted:

"We believe Denny is innocent, and he has got to have fair play."

"He will have fair play," cried Marcus Townsend, "and I'll bet my life that he will come out all right."

Young Wellington Rogers came puffing along at the moment and he was making for me, when the detective pushed him back, crying:

"No more of that! While the prisoner is in my charge I will see that he gets a chance."

"Let him give up the bonds," cried the old man, "and I will be light on him, if I can."

"I don't know anything about your bonds, or anything else," I cried, "and you can do your best now."

I felt very desperate at the moment, and who wouldn't when treated as I was.

As we were nearing the academy along came Professor James and his wife, with little Edna, and I must say that I never felt so bad in my life as when I saw her looking at me, as she inquired:

"What is wrong with Denny?"

"He is a robber," replied old Rogers, "as he stole my money and my bonds."

The good girl sprang forward at once, seized me by the hands and looked up in my face as she cried:

"I don't believe a word of it! Denny could never be a thief, for I know him better."

"Heaven bless you, young lady," was all I could say. And I will say that to my dying day.

CHAPTER VI.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

If I had been on trial with a serious crime charged against me, and the judge and jury were to declare me innocent I could not have been more overjoyed than I was when the bright little lady asserted her belief in my honesty.

Edna had scarcely spoken a word, however, when her mother seized her by the arm and dragged her away from me, crying:

"How dare you go near that wicked wretch, Edna, and I am sure he is guilty, as I always said that he had a horrid face."

"Certainly he is guilty, Mrs. James," rejoined Wellington Rogers. "We found my father's gold watch up under his bed, and he tried to kill me when I went to arrest him, and I shot the big negro by accident. It doesn't amount to much, however, as here comes Ajax hobbling along now."

Ajax did come hobbling along to meet us as we drew near the stable, and he at once cried out:

"I swear to goodness, Massa James, dat dere boy am innocent, an' it am all a put-up job on him, as sure as I be a black man."

Old Rogers and his son grumbled at the big negro; and I forgot my own trouble for the moment as I asked:

"Are you much hurt, Ajax?"

"Not bery much, chile, as de ball only glanced on de fat of my leg. It am well it didn't go frou yous heart, as I know Well Rogers meant it."

"Shut up, you black scoundrel," cried old Rogers. "I shouldn't wonder at all if you are in with the young Irish hound in the robbery, and you had better look out for yourself."

The big negro became terribly incensed on the moment, and lame as he was, he drew back and held up his fist in a boxing attitude as he cried:

"Come on har, an' you just tries it on, you blamed blowing English puffer you. I is black, but my heart is whiter than yours a hundred times ober."

The big Englishman laughed scornfully at Ajax, while Professor James cried:

"You keep still and clear in, Ajax, or I will discharge you on the instant."

It did not suit my black friend to be dismissed from the academy at the time, and he turned away muttering:

"All right, Massa James; but I swar ef I don't stick to Denny, an' I'll make Massa Rogers eat him words fore I is frough with him."

I was then led into the stable by the detective, and old Rogers and his son stood guard over me, while the officer from New York went up to the loft to search for more of the stolen property.

Marcus Townsend went up with him as he said to me:

"Keep up your courage, Denny, as I will see that you get fair play."

Mrs. James led her daughter into the academy, but the sweet girl cast one more assuring glance at me before she was led away.

The boys of the academy thronged around the stable, and old Rogers and his son kept heaping abuse on me while the others were searching in the loft above.

I did not make a single reply, as I bit my lips to suppress my anger as I said to myself:

"I was a fool to run away at all, and now I'll fight them out to the bitter end. If there is any justice in the land my innocence will be proved, and the rascal who got me into this scrape will be punished as he deserves before very long."

After the detective and Marcus Townsend were up-stairs

some time they came down again, the officer holding some bank-notes in his hand, as he said:

"We found those in a rat hole in the corner of the room above."

"I'll bet that's my money," cried old Rogers. "How much is there there?"

"Over fifty dollars," replied the detective.

I didn't pay much attention to this new evidence against me until I saw Marcus Townsend looking at me with a sorrowful face, and I then asked him:

"Do you believe, Mr. Townsend, that I put the money in the rat hole?"

The good young fellow looked at me very earnestly for a moment or so, as if trying to gaze into my very heart, when he stepped forward and grasped my hand very warmly, as he cried:

"I don't believe it, Denny, and I am going to stick to you like a friend."

Old Rogers grumbled to himself, and then cast a significant glance at his son as he cried:

"He wants another drubbing, Wellington."

My brave young friend scowled back defiantly, as he replied:

"Yes, and I'll take a dozen good lickings, if necessary, Mr. Rogers, before you or your son can make me believe that Denny here is guilty. I now tell you again that I will stand to him, and so will my father, and we will see that he gets justice."

"He's sweet on the bog-trotter's sister," cried young Rogers, with a broad grin.

Marcus Townsend's eyes gleamed with rage for a moment, and I thought that he was going to strike the insulting young puppy, but he curbed himself, and replied in quiet tones:

"You are not much of a gentleman, Rogers, or you wouldn't insult the helpless in that way."

I was almost tempted to turn and hit the young rascal also, but I curbed my temper nicely, and ground my teeth as I said to myself:

"Will my day ever come at all? Oh, if I was only over this charge, I feel able to surprise him and his father in a way they very little dream of."

After the detective and old Rogers had consulted a little while, the officer turned to me and asked:

"Will you agree to give up the bonds and other things taken, Dennis Driscoll?"

I shook my head in a very decided manner, and then replied:

"I won't agree to give anything up, sir, for the very good reason that I didn't take anything at all from Mr. Rogers' house, and I swear to goodness that I am as innocent as the child unborn."

A sneering laugh burst from old Rogers and his son, and the former cried:

"Let us away with him to jail, officer, and I want you to look after that nigger, Ajax, also."

Ajax had retreated into the house when threatened by Professor James, but he appeared again when his name was thus mentioned, and he at once cried:

"Dis chile am ready to stand any charge, an' he defies you right har, Massa Rogers."

They did not seem inclined to arrest Ajax at the time, however, but young Rogers gave him one slap in the face as he said:

"All in good time, you black rascal. The Irish cur here will soon turn informer, and then we will go for you hot and heavy, you can bet."

I still kept my temper, but every insult heaped on me only added more and more to the mountain of rage forming against my persecutors.

The detective then led me away to the village, and Marcus Townsend and several of the other boys followed us to the office of the justice of the peace.

After I was examined I was sent to the little jail, and Mar-

cus Townsend hastened away to look for his father, saying: "Don't be down-hearted, Denny, and I'll bet you will be soon all right again, and that your enemies will shake in their boots."

I was down-hearted enough when I found myself alone in the little prison, and who wouldn't be under the circumstances?

My father was still sick in bed from the treatment he had received from old Rogers, and I knew that he couldn't do much for me even if he was able to be around.

My poor mother had her hands full of trouble and sorrow before I got into the scrape, and I was praying she wouldn't hear about my trouble at all, but she did.

Old Rogers and the detective went straight to our little cabin after putting me in the jail, and they tossed everything about looking for the things which had been stolen.

My father never said a word while the search was going on, but my mother told me afterward that he gave several awful looks at old Rogers as if he meant to say:

"This is some more of your black work, and poor and helpless as I am now I will be even with you yet."

Marcus Townsend brought my sister Mary to see me that night, and it was then she told me how young Rogers had annoyed her, while he had also threatened to crush me if she did not marry him in secret.

Poor Mary had been discharged from her place when the people who employed her heard that I had been arrested for the burglary next door; but she was a brave girl for her age, and she didn't lose heart at all, as she said to me:

"As sure as there is a heaven above us, Denny, you will be righted soon, and those who are working against you will be punished!"

Marcus Townsend's father came to see me also, and he at once took my case in hand.

As he was the cleverest lawyer in the neighborhood, and a good man besides, I had great confidence in him.

After he had asked me several questions he pulled out his watch, saying:

"I am going right down to New York on the next train, and I will bring some one up with me who will aid us in working out this case. You keep quiet, Driscoll, and don't say a word about what I am doing."

I then knew that the good man was going down after a clever detective, and the game against my enemies would soon commence in earnest, with friends on my side who would show me the best of fair play.

My enemies were very active also, as I learned next morning that the Rogers were working tooth and nail to have me rail-roaded off to Sing Sing as soon as possible.

Lawyer Townsend managed to get me out on bail on the following day, or I would have been sent to the county jail, and two of the richest men in the neighborhood went security for me.

Late in the afternoon young Marcus came to our cabin and asked me to take a walk with him, as he had something to say to me.

We walked out to a lonesome place behind the burying ground where we met a stout gentleman with a clean fat face, and who looked very like a preacher.

That fat gentleman was Mr. Thomas Jones, the detective from New York, who had been engaged in my behalf.

He asked me several questions about my way of living, and about my sister and young Rogers, and of course I told him that I had nothing to do with the robbery at all.

I was very glad to notice that he believed me, for he said as much, while he warned me to keep quiet for the present, and not to tell any one that he was engaged for me.

The detective was stopping with the clergyman in the village with whom he was acquainted, and as he looked like a minister himself none of my enemies suspected that he was engaged in the case.

As I couldn't think of going back to the academy while the

serious charge was hanging over me, I stopped at our little cabin and helped my poor father as much as I could.

Old Mr. Townsend insisted on our taking a little money from him, and he also promised to get Mary another situation in the village.

It is a great thing to have friends in trouble, and I would be an ungrateful wretch, indeed, if I ever could forget young Marcus Townsend and his father.

I didn't go round much in the village for the next two days, as it was easy to see that most of the people believed that I was guilty, and I didn't care to meet the black looks and insults I was sure to get on all sides.

Old Rogers suspended payment two days after I was arrested, and he announced at the same time that it was all on account of the robbery.

I then began to suspect that the rogue had not been robbed at all, and that the whole business was a plot to humbug honest people out of their money as it soon became rumored around that old Rogers had been living very fast, and that he was heavily in debt.

I said as much to young Marcus Townsend, and he smiled in a knowing manner as he replied:

"Don't you say that to any one else, Denny, but I can tell you that my father is of the same opinion and so is Mr. Tom Jones. The only thing that puzzles the detective is why they should try to make a victim of you in the affair."

"Young Wellington seemed to hate me from the first day I met him," I replied, "and then he is angry with Mary because she won't marry him."

"Did you ever give him any back talk when he insulted you?"

"I never said an ugly words to him, even when he knocked me senseless with his bat."

Marcus Townsend then asked me if I ever felt like fighting young Rogers, and I honestly answered that I hoped to be able to do that when I was cleared of the robbery, and that the young bully would not have it all his own way hereafter.

My young friend then advised me to keep out of the way of my enemies for the present if possible, and to trust to his father and the detective for getting me clear.

Greatly to my surprise, Professor James sent after me that night to go back to the academy, and after consulting with my parents I agreed to do so.

As the summer vacation was soon to commence I wouldn't see much of the boys, and I would have more time for private studying.

Ajax and his wife welcomed me warmly when I took up my abode over the stable, and they both assured me that the tide was turning against the Rogers, and that Professor James was very doubtful as to my guilt, even with all the proof against me.

Ajax hinted that Edna James influenced her father in my favor, but he also told me that Mrs. James was as bitter against me as ever.

A couple of weeks went by, the academy was closed for the summer vacation, and there did not seem to be much progress made toward clearing the charge made against me.

I kept very close to my work around the academy, and I studied harder than ever during the summer evenings, while I suffered torments of agony over the dark cloud that was on me.

Marcus Townsend often came to see me, and advised me to have patience, as he said to me:

"Mr. Jones is watching old Rogers in New York, and he feels certain that he will soon hit on a clew that will expose the whole plot against you."

The advice was well enough, but I was sick and tired of depending on others, and I determined to try my own hand in working out the mystery.

There is nothing like fighting your own battles in this life, and young and green as I was then, I made up my mind to try my own hand in that and all other battles of life thereafter.

Through the influence of Mr. Townsend, my trial was put off until after the summer vacation was over, and I had plenty of time for thought and action.

I first set about watching young Rogers on the sly, and I soon found out that he was associating with some very bad young men in the neighboring town.

Old Rogers spent most of his time in New York, as his business in the village had gone to the bad entirely.

The old fellow had taken to drinking in the great city, and the son pretended that his father was trying to get into some small business there.

The young fellow still lived in the house in the village, which had been left to him by his mother, and his aunt kept house for him.

The house could not be sold until he was twenty-one years of age, and it would then bring a very good figure.

One of the first things I discovered in making private inquiries was that Well Rogers was seen a good deal with a young fellow from the neighboring town who bore a very bad reputation, and who had been already arrested for robbery.

That young fellow's name was Dick Hill, and it was suspected that he had something to do with the burglaries committed in the neighborhood at the time when I was first accused.

The detective from New York discovered that old Rogers had really a lot of bonds and a large sum in cash about the time of the robbery, and I learned that Dick Hill was seen in the village with young Rogers on the very night of the trouble.

Putting everything together, I made up my mind that young Rogers and his friend had robbed his own father, and it was hard to tell whether the old man was in the game or not.

Mr. Tom Jones made several visits to the village to consult with the Townsends and myself, and we all agreed that I was on the right track, and that it was only necessary to trace the rest of the stolen property to the real thieves in order to clear me of the charge.

Then an idea occurred to me that the robbers may have hidden the rest of the property around the stable when they placed the money and the watch there to entrap me, and I commenced a thorough search for it.

Great was my joy when I found it at last, but I was so careful about the discovery and the fresh trouble it might bring on me that I didn't tell anyone about it except Ajax.

We then agreed to keep the secret and to wait and watch, feeling assured that the thieves would come after their booty when they thought it would be safe to dispose of the bonds.

It was a lucky thing for me that I went back to the academy again, or I would never have been able to clear my name, and my life would have been ruined forever.

And I may thank Edna James for my return, as it was she who insisted on her father sending for me.

CHAPTER VII.

MY FIRST REAL FIGHT.

Although the discovery I had made was a great point in my favor I had sense enough to know that I had still a ticklish job before me in bringing the guilt home to the right party.

The Rogers were playing a very deep game, and I could see how they would work out of the trouble even if we caught them in the act of taking away the stolen bonds.

Father and son had both declared from the first that I had the articles in hiding somewhere, and what was more natural than for them to seek for them in or around the stable, where they had first found the watch and the money?

If Ajax and I did pounce out on them while they were removing the documents they could turn around and swear that it was only natural for them to search for their own prop-

erty where they believed it to be, and then they could throw the full blame on us.

From the information I had received, however, I believed that the thieves would try to recover the bonds on the sly, and then dispose of them secretly, so as to cheat their creditors still more.

I would have consulted with Marcus Townsend and his father on the subject at last, but they went away for a summer trip to California, and I did not know when they would return.

Mr. Tom Jones, the detective, was busy in New York, and I didn't care to trouble him, as he appeared to grow lukewarm in my case after the first week or so.

Ajax had plenty of brains; he was honest and faithful to me, and I knew that I could depend on him to the death if it came to a hand-to-hand struggle.

After discussing the subject for some time, however, we both agreed that we ought to have another witness in our favor, and we pitched on the bright little lady who had declared her belief in my innocence from the first.

Edna James was then in her sixteenth year, and she was sensible and brave, as well as highly intelligent and beautiful.

It was Ajax who told her our secret and the object he had in doing so, and she at once entered heart and soul into our project.

My sister Mary got another situation in the village, and as the house in which she lived was nearly opposite Rogers' place she was able to tell us about the goings and comings of the young rogue and his friend.

Mary was not fully in my secret, but she knew that I was watching the father and son, and she was always ready to give me information.

One afternoon she came up to me and informed me that old Rogers and young Dick Hill were visiting the house that afternoon, and that she had seen them consulting with Wellington for a long time.

Something whispered to me that the rogues were about to make a serious move, and I sent my sister back to keep an eye on them, while Ajax and I prepared to receive them if they should come to the stable.

Ajax also spoke to Edna James, and she was to be on the lookout from the bedroom in the academy, as previously agreed upon.

I want to mention here that my father was around again and at work, and that he was also as strong as ever.

Ajax and I had so arranged that we could hide ourselves away in the stable and watch those who came after the bonds without being observed ourselves.

We had also arranged to give signals to the brave young lady in the academy by day or night, although we knew that the rogues were sure to come in the secrecy and shelter of the darkness.

I forgot to mention that Ajax was compelled to get rid of his big black dog soon after he married Susan, as the cook did not like the animal, and she made him give him away to a friend down near Jersey City.

About nine o'clock that night as we were watching for the approach of the rogues, I perceived a dark object coming along up the avenue toward the academy, and as it drew nearer I noticed that it was the big dog.

The poor fellow had returned to us again as soon as he could escape from his new master, and it was very evident that he had been traveling all day, as he was very weary when he reached the stable.

It was then agreed that I should keep him with me for the present, and after we had given him something to eat and drink we sent him to rest up on the hayloft.

It wasn't our object to disturb the rogues when they did come after the bonds, as we proposed to watch them after they left with them, and then have them arrested with the stolen documents in their possession.

About eleven o'clock that night I took up a position in the grove from whence I could watch all the paths leading to the academy building.

Ajax was keeping watch from his room at the top of the principal building, and the good young lady was on the lookout in her bedroom on the second floor.

From the positions we then held we could all see any one approaching and entering the stable, and we were prepared to follow them when they returned to the village.

After the dog had rested for some time, I took him out with me, as we feared that he would pounce on the strangers if we left him in the stable.

While I was thus watching the big dog gave a low growl, and I turned to see an old fat negro standing close behind me in the grove.

It was evident that the dog knew the old fellow as the animal shook his tail as he approached nearer to me, saying:

"Don't you get excited, young fellow, as I am your friend in this affair."

I looked at the chap in the dim light, but I couldn't remember that I ever saw him before, although his voice was a little familiar to me, and thinking that he may be Ajax's friend, I said to him:

"Did you come here to see Ajax?"

"Not exactly, as I came to see you. I met that dog this evening as I was looking around the village, and I made friends with him, as I thought he belonged up here."

I kept looking at the old fellow, and for the life of me I couldn't make him out, although I was certain that I knew his voice.

When he first spoke to me he used the negro dialect, but he dropped it entirely as he continued to answer me, while I asked:

"What do you want with me, sir, and what are you doing on these private grounds?"

The old fellow patted the dog on the head, and chuckled to himself before he replied:

"Then you don't know me?"

"I can't say that I do."

"It is just as well you didn't, but you must know me now."

The disguised man scarcely uttered the words when I knew him to be Mr. Tom Jones, the detective from New York, who was working in my case.

I had wronged the man when I thought he was neglecting me, as I had soon to learn that he was very active in the business all through.

I was a little surprised on finding who it was, and I said to him:

"I know you now, sir, but I didn't expect to see you here and in such a trim."

The old gentleman chuckled again, and kept playing with the dog's head as he replied:

"Why, I have been around the village here for several days, and I have been watching your friends. I think I can tell what you are doing out here now."

"Then what am I doing, sir?" I asked.

"You are expecting a visit from the rascals who got you into this scrape."

"That is very true, sir."

"What have you discovered since I spoke to you last?"

I was just about to tell the detective what I had really discovered, when a loud cry of fright came from the direction of the academy, and the good dog bounded away in that direction on the instant.

Several cries followed in quick succession, and away I darted, as I said to the detective:

"The villains must have got into the main building while we were watching for them elsewhere."

The disguised detective bounded after me, and it was wonderful how he could run, as he nearly kept up to me as we dashed along, while he asked me:

"Have you a weapon about you, Dennis?"

About eleven o'clock that night I took up a position in the

"Only this stick, sir," I replied, as I drew a stout blackthorn from under my coat.

"That may do on a pinch. Keep close to me and follow the dog."

We could see the dog bounding away toward the main entrance to the academy, while the cries and yells in the building grew stronger and stronger.

"It is fire or burglars," said the old detective to me, as we dashed up to the front door.

At that moment the door was flung open, and four men with blackened faces dashed out against us.

The dog made at one of them, but the animal was flung aside and stretched on the ground.

I struck at another of the black chaps with my stick, and down he went before me on the ground, as he growled out:

"Scoot, all you fellows, as this game is up here now, and no mistake."

He then sprang up, and made a whack at me, but I warded off the blow.

The people in the house screamed with terror, and a general hubbub ensued all around.

Three of the robbers broke away from us and darted down toward the village, with the detective and Ajax running after them and yelling to raise the alarm, while the bell on the building rang out strong to give the warning also.

I kept struggling with the fellow before me, and although I got several sharp cracks about the body, I managed to down him at last and to keep him there with my foot on his breast as I cried:

"I have got one of the rascals, anyway."

I then looked down at the fellow's black face, and I saw that he was either stunned or pretended to be.

At that moment I heard footsteps behind me coming from the direction of the stable, but before I could turn around to see who it was I got a welt in the back of the head that laid me sprawling on the grass in front of the academy, and I saw a million stars at the time if I saw one at all.

The next thing I felt was somebody dashing a lot of water over my face, and then two persons lifted me up from the grass and took me into the house.

One of them was Susan, the fat cook, and the other was Professor James himself.

I had recovered my senses somewhat when they took me into the front room, and there I saw Mrs. James on a rocking-chair, going on at an awful rate about the loss of some money and jewels.

The moment she saw me she sprang up and made at me as if she would tear my eyes out, as she cried:

"There is the Irish wretch who robbed me, and I am ready to swear it was him I saw in the bedroom taking my things awhile ago."

"Oh, mother, how could that be," cried Edna, "when he was outside fighting the burglars?"

"I know what I am talking about, you saucy little wretch!" cried her mother, as she shook her fist in my face. "This comes of bringing the young robber back here again after he was detected before."

I was stupefied enough at the charge, you may be sure, and I looked around for the disguised detective or for Ajax, but neither of them was at hand.

I was getting all right as far as my head went, and I turned to the cook and asked her:

"Where is your husband, Susan?"

"He am gone away after de robbers, an' I suppose he am dead now."

"Where is the black old man who came here with me?"

The cook shook her head and answered:

"Didn't see no black man but de robbers, an' dey wasn't real culled folks."

The professor was staring from his wife to me as if not knowing what to make of the affair, and I felt that I was

going to get into another bad scrape, unless the detective or Ajax soon came to my rescue.

I was also anxious to be away to the village, as I thought that there would be work for me there, but I was afraid to make a move, fearing that Mrs. James would accuse me of wanting to run away and insist on holding me.

At that moment the big black dog came into the room wagging his tail, and he sprang toward me in the most friendly manner.

I then noticed that the faithful animal had a cut on the side of the head, and I took out my old handkerchief to bind the wound, as I said:

"The poor dog knows that we tried to catch the robbers, and that we were watching for them."

"And so do I," cried Edna, as she grasped me by the hand. "I saw you fighting with the wretches from the window, and there was an old black gentleman with you."

"And I swear that I saw him in my bedroom taking my things!" cried Mrs. James. "I couldn't be mistaken in his Irish face."

"What is that you say, lady?" cried a stern voice behind us.

We all turned to the new-comer on the instant, and there stood the detective disguised as an old negro, with the marks of the recent fight very apparent on his face and clothes.

Professor James and his wife both stared at the intruder, while the former demanded:

"What are you doing in here, sir, and who are you, I would like to know?"

The detective pulled back his coat a little and showed a bright shield as he replied in quiet tones:

"I am an officer from New York, sir, and my name is Jones. Did I not hear that lady say that she saw this young fellow in her bedroom a short time ago?"

"I am certain of it," answered Mrs. James, as she bent a spiteful look on me.

"And I am certain that you did not, madam, as the boy was with me out on the grounds when the alarm was given in here. I have been on the track of the people who attacked you since early this evening, and I am ready to prove that Dennis Driscoll here had nothing to do with entering your house, or with the other crime against him, either."

I could have kissed the detective at the moment, but my heart fell a little again when Mrs. James cried:

"My word is as good as yours, sir, and my eyes also, and I can swear that I saw Dennis Driscoll there in my room taking my watch and jewels when I first raised the alarm and aroused my husband. The rascal then ran out of the room, but not before I fully recognized him by the light of the lamp on the bureau."

As the woman was thus speaking I felt that it was a lucky thing for me that I met the detective in the grove that night, and I also felt that one of the robbers had fixed himself up to look like me for the purpose of getting me into another bad scrape.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME QUEER REVELATIONS.

Mrs. James continued to rave about the loss of her jewels and money, swearing the while that I was the robber, and calling on her husband to arrest me.

The poor man did not seem to know what to do, as his daughter declared as strongly that I was innocent, and she faced her mother for the first time, crying:

"You are a wicked woman, and I am glad you are not my real mother."

I only knew then that Edna was not Mrs. James' daughter, and I was very glad of it.

The detective put a stop to all quarreling about me for the

A POOR IRISH BOY.

time as he laid his hand on my shoulder and said to the professor:

"I will take charge of this boy, and I will be responsible for him."

"But who will be security for you?" cried Mrs. James, as she glared at the detective.

"I will," answered a manly voice.

And then into the front room walked Lawyer Townsend, followed by his son Marcus.

You may be sure I was delighted to see my friend back from California at such a time, and wasn't I proud when Marcus came over and shook me by the hand, crying:

"You will soon be all right now, Denny, but I see that you have been in a row."

Edna James shook Marcus by the hand also, as she said to him:

"Yes, and he fought like a hero to-night for us. I am so glad that you are here, as I know that you are the poor fellow's friend."

"I am indeed," said Marcus.

A lot of the people of the village came along at the time, and among them were my father and my sister Mary.

While they were all asking various questions about the robbery, the detective drew Mr. Townsend and myself aside and he asked me:

"Have all the rascals escaped?"

I then went on to tell him of my adventure, in as few words as possible, and I ended by saying:

"I am certain I knew the voice of the last chap I knocked down, but I couldn't tell his face with the black stuff on it."

It then became apparent that all the robbers had escaped, so far as heard from, and on counting their number we came to the conclusion that there must have been six of them in the gang.

When I told the detective about seeing two of them come from toward the stable to attack me at the end of the row, he appeared to be puzzled, and remarked:

"What could they want over in the stable?"

I then up and told the pair of them about my discovery of the bonds and other things in the stable.

Both the detective and Mr. Townsend frowned at me on hearing what I had to say, and the former then said in angry tones:

"You were very foolish, young fellow, to keep the fact from us. Now let us see if the bonds are over in the stable yet."

We then went over to the stable, taking Professor James and Edna with us, and I let the young lady point out where she had seen the bonds.

They had been concealed under a board in the corner of the loft where I slept, and we were both certain that they were there that morning.

And so was Ajax.

Great was our surprise, then, when we both lifted the board, in the presence of the witnesses, to find that the stolen articles had disappeared that very night.

It then flashed on me that the two rascals I had seen coming from the stable had been securing the bonds and the money while the others were robbing the academy, and I told as much to those around me.

The detective shook his head and frowned at me as he remarked:

"You may be right, young fellow, but it looks bad for you not telling us about it before."

"But he told me," protested Edna James; "and we agreed to watch the robbers taking the things away secretly, and then to catch them with them in their possession, so that they could not say that it was Dennis here who gave them to us."

The detective shook his head again and then remarked in serious tones:

"Now you see the nonsense of young folks like you playing detective on your own hook. I am certain that I winged one

of the rascals in the leg, and we are pretty sure to catch him. I fear that we lost a good chance of exposing the whole affair, but we will have to make the best of a bad job."

It was then proposed to go into the house again and ascertain how much was taken.

In the meantime the constables in the town and several of the brave citizens had started out in search of the robbers.

As we were returning back to the house I drew my sister Mary aside and asked her:

"What about the Rogers?"

"I didn't see them stir out to-night, Denny, and I watched the house until I heard the alarm."

"Did you see any one going in there after the alarm was given?"

"I did not; but I was in such a fidget when I heard the bell ring that I didn't watch very well, and I came along out here with father when I saw him coming."

When we got back to the front room I was a little surprised to see old Rogers and his son consulting with Mrs. James.

They both gave a look at me, and the old fellow sneered as if he meant to say to me:

"You are at it again."

The detective did not pay much attention to the Rogers, as he addressed Mrs. James, saying:

"I wish you would find out how much you have lost, Mrs. James, and be prepared to recognize the articles stolen, if necessary."

At that moment a commotion was heard outside the house, and then Ajax staggered into the hallway bearing something on his broad back.

"It is one of the robbers," cried Edna, as Ajax flung the fellow on the floor.

"Save me, save me," cried Mrs. James, as she drew back in terror also.

The fellow was helpless, however, as Ajax had bound his arms behind him.

Looking down at his captive with a triumphant smile, the big negro cried:

"I guess you won't come fooling around here no more, young fellow. Blame my eyes, how much like Denny Driscoll he am."

The others in the room stared down at the prisoner, while exclamations of surprise burst out on all sides.

"The rogue is the dead image of Denny," cried my sister, "and he has some of his old clothes on, too. Who can he be at all?"

The detective gave a significant glance at Mrs. James, and then pointed to the young fellow who was lying bound on the floor, as he inquired:

"Isn't this the person whom you really saw in your bedroom to-night, Mrs. James?"

The spiteful woman stared down at the prisoner, who shut his eyes at the moment, and I could see that she shuddered as she answered, in faint tones:

"No, sir; that is not the person whom I saw in my bedroom to-night."

"Then he am de one I seed running down de stairs," cried the big negro, "an' I follerred him clear away inter de wood, whar I laid him out after a hard tussle."

The prisoner, who had not yet spoken a word, then raised his head and stared around the room until his eyes fell on Mrs. James.

I was watching the woman at the moment, and I could see that she shuddered again and drew back as if to get out of the young fellow's sight.

The prisoner then spoke aloud with a decided brogue, saying:

"Ye are all mistaken, good people, as I didn't come here to rob at all, only to see Mrs. James there."

Every one present who knew me stared at me when they

heard the prisoner, as the young rogue imitated my voice to perfection.

"What did you come to see Mrs. James for?" demanded the detective.

"Because she is an old friend of mine, to be sure. If she will only whisper here awhile, bad cess to me but she will clear me of being a robber at all."

Mrs. James groaned as the fellow was speaking, and some of us had to smile at the droll way in which he continued to imitate me.

I kept staring at him with open eyes and mouth, as I said to myself:

"Who in the mischief can he be at all, and what is the matter between him and Mrs. James?"

I forgot to say that the chap's face wasn't blackened at all like the others we met in the fight, and that he must have been about my own age and size, while the closer I looked at him I knew that he had on a suit of my clothes which I wore in the winter time.

The last time I saw them they were hanging up in the loft over the stable.

The detective then walked up to Mrs. James and placed his hand on her shoulder as he said to her:

"It is necessary, madam, that you take a good look at the prisoner there and see if you recognize him, as he pretends to know you."

The spiteful woman cast an angry glance at me, as if she still blamed me for all her trouble, and she then shook herself as if mustering up her courage to walk over and take a good look at the fellow.

I could see that he winked up at her in a sly manner, as he said to her:

"Won't you whisper to me, Mrs. James, as I have something to tell you?"

The young rogue was sitting upon the floor at the time, and Mrs. James drew back with an angry frown as she cried out:

"You impudent scoundrel! I do not know you at all, and you must be a relative of that other young robber, Dennis Driscoll."

And then she gave me a look which meant to say:

"I'll stick to what I have to say about you, no matter what happens."

"Then you do not know the young fellow, madam?" said the detective with a suspicious smile.

"Not from Adam," was the stiff reply from Mrs. James as she drew back again.

"Do you know him, Discoll?" asked the detective of me with another smile.

"Not from a crow, sir," I replied.

He then turned to Professor James, who was also very much excited, and asked:

"Do you know the prisoner, professor?"

The professor hesitated, and cast a timid glance at his wife, who shook her head and frowned at him as if she meant to say:

"I'll give it to you if you expose me."

The detective and all of us saw the glances passing between them, and then Lawyer Townsend turned on the distressed man, crying:

"Professor James, I warn you that you must speak out and tell us if you know the prisoner. You see that Dennis Driscoll here has been accused by your wife, and we can all notice that the prisoner looks like him. It will make matters clearer if we know who the prisoner is, and I demand that you tell us."

The professor groaned in agony, and his wife cried out to him:

"I command you to keep silent, professor."

Then Edna ran over and flung her arms around her father's neck, as she cried:

"And I call on you, father, to recognize the prisoner if you

can, and clear the poor lad who has been persecuted enough already."

We could all see that the miserable man was struggling between the fear of his wife and his inclination to do justice.

Then the detective spoke in very stern tones, crying:

"Professor James, if you do not admit who the prisoner is, I will accuse you of conspiring with him to rob your own academy."

It must be remembered that the detective was still disguised as a big black negro, and he looked funny enough as I stood there threatening the profesor.

Then Mrs. James burst forth in full fury, and she made a dash at the officer as if she would tear his eyes out, while she cried:

"What right have you, if you are an officer from New York, to come here fixed up as an old nigger and threaten us as you do? If my husband had a spark of spirit in him he would kick you and the others out of here at once, you meddling fools."

And the furious woman looked at Marcus and his father as if she would like to wring their necks for them at that very moment.

The detective did not seem to pay any attention to her angry fit, but addressed us all in general, as he cried out in a loud voice:

"Is there any one else here who can recognize the prisoner on the floor? If there is I want them to know that they will be committing a crime by holding back."

The fat cook who was married to Ajax then stepped forward and cast one timid glance at Mrs. James and another at the prisoner, as she answered:

"I knows the young feller."

"Then who is he?"

"He is Missa James' son."

We all started on hearing the announcement, and then the prisoner cried, in his roguish tones:

"Sure, and I could have tould ye that long ago if you asked me the question. Good mother, you will bear me out in saying that I came here to-night on the sly to see you, and that I wasn't with the robbers at all, at all, good or bad."

The spiteful woman appeared to be dumfounded by the revelation, and she could only groan forth:

"You miserable young wretch, I knew that you would expose me at last."

A quiet smile appeared on the detective's face, as he looked down at the prisoner, and asked:

"Were you in your mother's room to-night?"

"Don't answer him," cried Mrs. James, stirring up again, "as I swear that it was Dennis Driscoll there I saw in my bedroom to-night."

"Oh, what a fib," cried Ajax, "when I seed Denny running to de house from de grove when the fust cry was raised har in de house."

"And so did I," cried Edna.

"And so did I," cried the detective, "and the dog here could say the same if he could only speak. Mrs. James, you are going too far in this business, and I would advise you to stop where you are."

The spiteful woman was not subdued, however, as she pointed to the door, and cried:

"And I advise you, you impudent old fool, to clear out of here at once."

The detective bent down and grabbed the prisoner by the shoulder, as he replied:

"All right, madam, I am going, but I am going to take this fellow along with me. Professor James, do you acknowledge that this young fellow is your son?"

The professor groaned aloud and glared at his wife ere he cried:

"No, no, the young wretch is no son of mine. He is my

wife's son by a former marriage, and I washed my hands of him long ago."

Old Rogers and his son had not spoken a word aloud while the exposure was going on, and you may be sure that I kept my eyes on them in the hope of finding out if there was any connection between my enemies and the prisoner.

As I didn't see the least sign passing between them, I commenced to think that I had been wrong in my surmises, and that old Rogers and Wellington had been really robbed as they had said.

The detective appeared to be puzzled also, as he hesitated to drag the prisoner out, while he said to him in pleasant tones:

"Young fellow, if you are wise you will make a clean breast of it, and tell us who were here with you to-night."

The prisoner looked at old Rogers with a sly smile as he inquired:

"Will you let up on me, Mr. Rogers, if I give you back your bonds?"

"Where are the bonds, you rascal?" demanded old Rogers in great excitement.

"Promise him," whispered the detective to old Rogers, "as it can't do any harm, and we all want to get at the bottom of the affair."

I then saw that old Rogers was very anxious to recover the bonds, and he said to the prisoner:

"If you will give me up my bonds I will be as light on you as I can."

"Do you swear to it?" asked the young prisoner.

Before old Rogers could reply Mrs. James sprang toward her son and clapped her hand on his mouth, as she cried out to him:

"Fool, fool, you do not know what you are about, and I command you to keep quiet."

The professor dragged his wife away, while the young fellow replied:

"I am bound to save my own neck, old woman, and I have made up my mind to show up the whole game now. Let us get out of here and I will show you where the bonds are."

CHAPTER IX.

A TURN IN THE TIDE.

The detective at once led the prisoner out of the academy as if afraid to keep him in the presence of his mother.

A good many of us went with them to see the matter out, and Mrs. James was following us also when Lawyer Townsend cried out in his stern tones:

"I'd advise you, Professor James, to make your wife retire for the present."

The spiteful woman was going to give more sauce when the professor acted toward her as I never saw him act before.

The poor man was aroused at last, and he sprang back and seized her in his arms as he cried:

"You must not disgrace me any more."

He then lifted her up the steps, while she yelled like fury, and cried:

"That young wretch must not betray me, or I will put an end to my life."

The young wretch did not pay much attention to what his mother said, as he led us over toward the stable while he said to the detective:

"You only promise to let up on me, and I will make a clean breast of the whole affair."

The detective humored him by saying:

"It will be the best game for you to play, as we are certain to grab the others, and some of them may turn against you."

Before we reached the stable we were joined by the justice of the peace in the village, and he at once said to Mr. Townsend:

"We just caught a fellow out on the plank road with his face all black, and he turns out to be young Dick Hill of the next town."

"Then I will tell all I know," cried the prisoner, "as Dick is sure to give me away."

The detective and Mr. Townsend encouraged the fellow, and so did old Rogers, indeed.

The more I watched old Rogers and his son the more I became convinced that I had wronged them in thinking that they had robbed themselves.

When we reached the stable the prisoner led us to a closet and there, under a pile of rubbish, we found the bonds stolen from old Rogers.

He then confessed that he belonged to a gang of young burglars led on by Dick Hill, and it was they who had stolen the things from Rogers' house.

He told us a good many other things about throwing the blame on me, and he confessed that it was his wicked mother who had put him up to the job.

It seems that the woman hated me for some secret reason, from the moment she caught sight of me at the Battery in New York.

The prisoner, whose real name was Bob Ferris, was her son by a former husband.

The young rogue had been brought up in the city of New York, and he had gone to the bad at a very early age.

After he had told a good deal the detective turned on him and asked:

"Were you down on this young fellow here?"

"Not a bit."

"Then why did you try to throw all the blame on him?"

"Tha was the old woman's idea, as she had some spite against the Irish fellow."

"How did you come to imitate his voice and his looks so well, as we can see that you are fixed up like him," inquired the detective.

The young rogue smiled proudly as he replied:

"Oh, you must know that I have been on the stage, and I saw this young fellow here several times when I came here to see my mother on the sly."

"Was it she planned the robbery in the academy to-night?"

"Yes, it was."

The young rascal then went on to explain that his mother was negotiating, through a party in New York, for the return of the bonds to old Rogers, and that she suggested to the gang the robbing of the academy while securing the bonds in the stable at the same time.

The detective then turned to old Rogers and asked:

"Were you negotiating for the return of the bonds, sir?"

"I was that, and the man in New York promised me that I would get them in the morning, on the payment of a thousand dollars. I am very glad I got them now without paying a dollar, as they will set me on my feet again."

The detective then looked suspiciously at young Rogers and his father as he inquired:

"How did you happen to come here after the robbery and accuse young Driscoll?"

"We got information that he was in the scrape through an anonymous note," answered the old man.

The detective then looked sharply at young Rogers as he asked:

"Have you not been associating with Dick Hill?"

Young Wellington did not flinch a bit at the question, and he promptly answered:

"I have, sir."

"Did you know that he was a thief for some time past?"

"I did, sir, and that was the very reason I wanted to get in

with him. I believed that he was in with Dennis here in the robbery that night, and I hoped to pump him and get back the bonds."

"Do you believe that Dennis here was in with him now?" asked the detective.

The young fellow faltered a little, and cast an ugly frown at me ere he replied:

"I don't see that he has cleared himself yet."

I didn't say a word to that, while the detective went on saying:

"Is it not true, young fellow, that you threatened to crush this Irish boy?"

"The young fellow gave me sauce, and I may have threatened to give him a good licking some day."

"Do you think you are able to do it now?" inquired the detective.

"I would like to have the chance."

Speaking for the first time as I felt like doing, I went up to young Rogers and shook my fist in his face as I said to him:

"You big, bully hound, you have been playing the tyrant over me, and abusing me ever since the first day I met you, and I now want you to know that I am ready and willing to have it out with you as soon as you like."

"We'll settle that work hereafter," cried the detective as he turned to the justice of the peace with a grin, "as we can't have any fighting before this gentleman."

Old Rogers had some good in him after all, and he clapped me on the shoulder as he said:

"I don't believe this lad had anything to do with the robbery at all, and I will be his friend hereafter."

Mr. Townsend and the justice of the peace then interfered when the detective proposed that Mrs. James should be arrested at once.

Some of them then hastened back into the academy only to find that the spiteful woman had fled.

Before leaving the place that night a thorough investigation was made of the whole business, and it was fully proved that Mrs. James and her wicked son were at the bottom of the robberies.

It was also proved that I was innocent, and the decent men present promised to befriend me thereafter.

Poor Professor James was in a terrible state over the disgrace to his wife, and Edna felt very bad, too, although she never liked her step-mother.

From the information we received from the prisoner, and led to by the detective from New York, we started out in search of the other robbers, and we had three more of them in jail at daylight the following morning.

Old Rogers was inclined to make friends with my father and I, but we would not have any of his patronage and we bluntly told him so.

Young Wellington came to me on the following morning, and he said to me:

"Do you think you are able to fight me?"

"I am able to try," I replied.

"Well, then, you have got to try and we will have it out this evening."

"I am ready."

"And I want to tell you one thing," continued the young bully, "and that is that this place isn't big enough to hold the two of us. If I lick you, as I am bound to do, I am going to run you out of this village, and the towns around it as well."

"You will have to lick me first," I answered.

We then settled about the fight, and it was agreed that we should have a quiet affair of it.

It would be folly for me to say that I wasn't nervous during the day about the fight, but you may be certain that I made up my mind to do my very best and to surprise those who thought that the big bully had an easy victory over me.

CHAPTER X.

THE TIDE FLOWS ON.

I had plenty to think about on the day after the attempted robbery at the academy.

The confession of Bob Ferris and the exposure of the plot against me by his spiteful mother, together with her flight, served to vindicate me to a great extent, and yet I was not thoroughly cleared of the first charge against me.

The arrest of four others followed soon after, but Dick Hill, their clever leader, managed to escape.

Mrs. James could not be discovered during the following day, though many suspected that she was still concealed in the academy.

Professor James was terribly crestfallen over the exposure, and Edna felt the disgrace also, although the wicked woman was only her step-mother.

One thing puzzled me very much, and that was the remarkable resemblance that Bob Ferris bore to me.

I saw the young rogue again on the following day, before he was removed to the county jail, and I noticed that he still spoke with an accent fully as strong as my own, even when speaking in the most serious tones.

My father and Mary, as well as my other friends, were also very much surprised at the resemblance, but no one could account for it.

On questioning my father I learned that he had an older brother, who had been a very wild lad in Ireland in his youth, and whom he had not heard from for more than twenty years.

That uncle of mine had enlisted in the English army, and it was reported that he deserted in Canada, but my father could not give me any definite information about him.

I then asked myself if that uncle of mine could have been the father of the young rogue who resembled me so much, and I even put the question to my father, who shook his head as he answered:

"I don't know what to say, son. My brother did look like me, and so do you. He was a wild clip, and I hope you will never take after him."

When I told my father about the fight I was engaged in with Wellington Rogers he became very angry with me at first, and said:

"It is the height of folly, sir, and I know that you are not able to do the big bully at all. You will get a fine beating for your trouble, and then he will impose on you more than ever afterward."

"But would you want me to keep on playing the coward, sir, and letting him impose on me?"

I could see that my poor father was very much troubled over the affair, as it was evident that he did not want me to play the cur, while he was afraid that the big bully would punish me very severely in the encounter.

We were talking over the affair in the stable of the academy in the afternoon, and Ajax came in at the moment and clapped me on the shoulder as he said to my father:

"Don't you worry your head 'bout Dennis here getting licked, sah, as I bets my bottom dollar he knocks the whole head off ob young Well Rogers."

The kindly negro then went on to explain that he had given me some lessons in the manly art, and he called on my father to feel my arm.

It was only natural that my father should feel anxious about me in the contest, and I know that he would willingly take a dozen beatings rather than witness it.

Yet the old fire was burning strong in him still, and I was certain that he meditated tackling old Rogers himself at the first favorable opportunity.

Yet father had become a lover of peace and order, and he knew that it would not redound to our credit for either

of us to engage in a fistic encounter with Rogers or his son, while he felt that we had both been imposed on, and that even the law-abiding citizens of the place could not blame us much for retaliating on our persecutors.

About an hour before the time appointed for my fight with Well Rogers, Edna James came to me with a very sad face, saying:

"Dennis, I hear that you are going to fight with Well Rogers this evening, and I want to know if it is true?"

As I looked in the face of the good young lady who had been my friend all through, I could not tell her a lie, and so I answered:

"You know, Miss Edna, that he has been imposing on me very much."

"I know he has, but you must promise me not to fight with him, or I'll never speak to you again. I know what you will say as an excuse for fighting, and that is that you will be called a coward, Dennis, but you must promise me for all that."

I shook my head sadly, and looked down at the ground as I replied:

"It would grieve me to the heart, Miss Edna, if I thought that you would never speak to me again, but don't you think that I have no spirit in me if I am only a poor Irish boy. I have put up with his insults and his abuse too long already, and I would sooner be dead than bear them again without turning on him."

The young girl sighed, and was turning away as she said to me in her sad tones:

"I know it is very difficult to bear what you do, Dennis, but I only ask you to do so for your own sake, as I know that it will make a great difference to you here if they continue your enemies."

"How is that, Miss Edna?" I asked, as I saw that she was keeping something back.

The good girl hesitated a moment, and then turned to me again, saying:

"It is a secret, but I know that you will not betray it. My poor father is now completely in the power of old Mr. Rogers, and he will persecute him hereafter more than you can think if you should happen to punish his son. He will be compelled to send you away from here in that case, and I know now he means well to you."

I understood the professor's position at once, and my heart was bursting as I replied:

"I will do anything you say, Miss Edna, but it will be hard to be called a coward, and to put up with the abuse I will get from young Rogers and all the other boys about here hereafter."

"But don't you fear that he will beat you almost to death?"

"I don't think so, miss; and it is better even to take a good beating than to be branded a coward forever, as I am sure to be."

The good girl hesitated a moment or two as if making up her mind what to say, and then she spoke out, saying:

"I don't want you to be called a coward forever, or to feel that you cannot resist an insult. Try to get out of the fight if you can with honor, and if you can't, do your best to punish the cruel young wretch, as I can never forget the day he knocked you down with the bat."

As the bright little lady said the last words she clasped her hands in mine for a moment and then ran away as fast as she could.

I then made up my mind that I would do my best to beat Well Rogers, and to throw up my chance in the academy if I succeeded in conquering him, so that no blame could fall upon Professor James.

We met in the secluded grove at the appointed hour, but you mustn't ask me to give you a regular description of the fight.

I can only say that I was not at all frightened at the size of my opponent, although he stood nearly a head over me, and he appeared to be so much stronger as well.

I do know that he gave me an awful mauling at first, and that his father jeered at me while he cried out to his son:

"Give it to the Irish cur, my lad, and let him see that an Englishman can lick a Paddy any day."

The old fellow spoke with a decided Cockney accent that I will not attempt to imitate, but I must say that from that day to this the voice of a blustering Englishman has been hateful to me.

My father did not say a word for some time while I was getting the worst of it, but he did give vent to his feelings at last in some words spoken in the Irish tongue, and those words meant:

"Take it easy, my son, and aim at the Sassenach's eyes every time."

Ajax gave me some very good advice at the same time, but I didn't mind it at all, as the Irish words kept ringing in my ears, while my Celtic heart responded to them.

It seemed to me at the time that the whole history of my country's wrongs thronged to my mind, and I felt like the heroes of the Irish Brigade charging in a famous battle, when the poet wrote of them:

"Each looked as if revenge for all
Were staked in him alone."

And maybe I didn't fly at my opponent's eyes after that.

It was little I cared for the blows I received in turn, it was little I heeded the taunts and jeers heaped on me by old Rogers, and I did not even mind the cheering words of encouragement that fell from Ajax and Marcus Townsend.

My whole heart and soul was in the fight, and when the tide once turned in my favor I kept at the big bully before me until I punished him to my heart's content.

Old Rogers was furious when he saw his son stretched helpless on the ground before me at last, and he danced and raved like a madman, as he cried:

"I can whip the young cub and his father together, and I'll do it before I leave the ground."

My father then went up to the old bully and said to him in a very quiet way:

"You took advantage of me some time ago when I wasn't in good trim, but I warn you now to let him alone hereafter."

Old Rogers was in the act of throwing off his coat—and he blustered and foamed like a mad bull—when Professor James, Lawyer Townsend, and the justice of the peace appeared on the scene and put a stop to any more fighting.

When old Rogers and his friends took away my opponent, I spoke to Professor James, saying:

"I want to tell you, sir, that I am going to leave your place, as I don't want to do you an injury by stopping here now."

Then Lawyer Townsend spoke up, saying:

"You must not leave here, Dennis, but you must enter the academy as a pupil, and I will be responsible for all your expenses."

I was going to refuse the kindly offer in as civil tones as I could, when young Marcus drew me aside and whispered into my ear:

"Don't make a fool of yourself by refusing, Denny, as you will never have such a chance in your life again. Father has taken a great liking to you, and he is bound to give you a lift in the world."

I thought of Edna at the moment, and I didn't refuse the offer.

Then I said to myself:

"I would be ungrateful, indeed, if I refused the kind offer, and who knows but I can pay the good gentleman back some time in my life. But I must soon see about making my own living as well while fighting my own way through life."

I couldn't describe to you the great joy of Ajax and his fat wife after my victory, and the good black fellow would clap me on the shoulder over and over again as he would say to me:

"Golly, Dennis, I thought you was a goner at de fust of de fight, but you fotched him at last and no mistake about it."

And I would clasp the kindly colored man by the hand as I would reply:

"I may thank you for beating him, Ajax, and I only hope to live to see the day that I can do as good a turn for you."

On the following week I was installed as a day scholar in the academy, and Lawyer Townsend and Marcus insisted that I should live with them in the meantime.

I agreed to the proposition on condition that I should be allowed to assist the good lawyer in his office after school hours, and as I already wrote a good plain hand, I was happy to know that I could be of some use to him.

While my fight with the bully of the academy had given me a certain reputation, my future life there was not the most agreeable in the world.

Old Rogers became a prominent man again on the recovery of his bonds, and he seemed to live with but one object in life.

That object appeared to be to crush the poor Irish lad who had defeated his son and to persecute his family as well.

Young Wellington soon recovered from the beating I had given him, and he returned to the academy with the declared intention of paying me back in time.

In the meantime Bob Ferris and his associates were tried and convicted, and I was honorably acquitted of all blame in the robberies.

If I surprised some of the boys by beating the bully of the school in a fair fight, I also astonished them by my educational acquirements before I was long at the academy.

Many of them sympathized with the poor Irish boy, and encouraged me to greater effort, while others sided with Well Rogers and pretended to look down on me as an intruder among them.

Marcus Townsend always stood to me in the most earnest manner, and he would often insist on sharing his pocket money with me, well knowing that it was difficult for me to keep up an appearance with the other boys of my age.

My father got a position as a foreman on the track soon after, my sister got a situation as a governess over two young children in the village, and I made myself so useful to the good lawyer that he gave me to understand that I more than repaid him for the expenses I was under.

The world went well with us all for about one year, and I am happy to say that I improved at the academy, not only in my learning, but in my manners and in my conversation as well.

It is very true that my name was still Dennis, and that I was looked down upon by many of my schoolmates, yet the spiteful ones were very careful to cast slurs at me only behind my back.

Acting under the advice of my good mother and Mr. Townsend, I curbed my temper a good deal, and I did not get into many quarrels during that time.

I was anxious to learn some useful trade or business, but Mr. Townsend and Marcus prevailed on me to remain at the academy, and the little loadstone was still there that was always destined to attract me through life.

During the year mentioned Well Rogers did not attempt to trouble me again, although I became his rival in the baseball field when Marcus Townsend went to New York city to college.

I knew that he was keeping it in for me, however, and that his father was also inciting him in various ways, while the old man often attempted to provoke a quarrel with my father.

During the year we never heard a word about Mrs. James, but it was easy to see that the professor was a crushed man, and it was hinted that his wife dragged a good deal of money out of him on the quiet.

It was rumored that she was living in the city of New York.

After I was over a year as a regular scholar at the academy we received information that Bob Ferris, Mrs. James' wild

young son, had escaped from prison, and that he was seen moving in the direction of our village.

Although nothing was proved against him I always had an idea that young Well Rogers had something to do with the gang of burglars, and that he was better acquainted with Bob Ferris than he pretended to be.

I was a little troubled on hearing that the young rogue who resembled me so much was out on the world again, as I had a presentiment that he would renew his operations around the village, and that I would get into another scrape on his account.

While I dreaded meeting the rogue, I was a little eager to ask him a few questions about his father and mother, in order to set my mind at rest on a certain point.

And it was destined that I was to encounter my double sooner than I expected.

CHAPTER XI.

IN ANOTHER BAD SCRAPE.

As I look back now, I can well realize what a splendid thing it is for a poor boy to receive a helping hand in the early struggles of life.

I have heard men boast that they fought their own way to fame or fortune, and that they had no one to thank but themselves, but if such is the case they must be rare exceptions, indeed.

How many young boys and men fail in the struggle and fall into the paths of crime and misfortune, when a little encouragement or kindly aid may have sent them on to the right road to success.

Although Mr. Townsend did give me a splendid push, as well as a lift out of the mire, he also taught me that I must rely on myself in the main, and he preached the same doctrine to his own son.

He often told us that the greatest and most prosperous of the leading men of the nation were the sons of poor parents, that wealthy people often spoiled their children by too much indulgence, and that self-reliance was the best safeguard and motto for young people.

Therefore, while I was encouraged to persevere in my uphill fight, I was also given to understand that I would only be upheld as I deserved, and that on my own exertions principally depended my success in life.

Winter was closing in again, and there was snow on the ground about the time that we heard of the escape of that young rogue, Bob Ferris.

Although the rascal had entered into the plot against me with his wicked and spiteful mother, somehow or another I did not feel very bitter toward him, and a feeling of pity would come into my heart now and then as I thought of him.

I can't say what put the young fellow into my head one evening as I was riding toward the village in Mr. Townsend's buggy, but I did think of him, and I pictured the sufferings he must have endured while escaping from the strong prison, in crossing the broad North River, and then in making his way through a country where almost every hand would be raised against him.

From what I had seen of Bob Ferris I judged that he was naturally a merry rogue, and I fancied that he might have been a good young fellow if his early training had been different.

I was about three miles from Middleville, and the snow was falling pretty fast at the time, when I espied some one walking along the road ahead of me in the gloom of the evening.

No thought of danger occurred to me at the moment, although I had over five hundred dollars in my pocket belonging to Mr. Townsend, which I had collected in a neighboring town.

Highway robbers were very scarce in the neighborhood since

the breaking up of Dick Hill's gang, and I had a good heavy whip in case of necessity.

I did grasp that whip a little tighter as I drew near the fellow on the road, who looked back at me as he moved to the side of the highway.

Then I saw that he was a negro, and that he carried a stout stick in his right hand.

As I was in the act of passing him, he suddenly cried out:

"Say, boss, how far am it to Middleville?"

I pulled up a little as I answered:

"Nearly three miles."

The black fellow increased his speed, and as I kept my eye on him I noticed that he was a rough-looking old customer with a grayish beard, about my own size.

I was trying on the horse again, when the fellow trotted on after me crying:

"Say, boss, could you gib a poor black fellah a ride to de village, as I be ready to drop down I is dat played out."

I was always an impulsive kind of a fellow, and I took pity on the black man at once, as I pulled up crying:

"Yes, get in, and I will take you to the village."

The man jumped into the wagon on the instant, and as he took a seat beside me I got a closer glimpse at his eyes.

That glimpse told me at once with whom I had to deal on the lonely road, while at the same instant I made up my mind as to how I should act.

Grasping the whip in the middle, I seized the fellow suddenly by the throat, letting the reins fall at the same time, while I called on the well-trained horse to keep still.

The horse obeyed me at once, and I kept the fellow clutched by the throat with my left hand and raised the whip with my right to strike him as I cried out in angry tones:

"I know you, you rogue, and I'll knock your head in if you attempt any of your tricks on me."

The fellow seemed to be stupefied for a moment or so, and he then gasped forth:

"What in the thunder do you mean, boss?"

Even while he was speaking he made a desperate attempt to break away from me and to use his stick against me.

I only hit him one blow when he fell out of the wagon, clutching at me at the same time and dragging me out with him.

We then rolled in the snow, which was not very deep at the time, fighting and struggling away at a furious rate, while I kept calling on the horse to stand still on the road.

The fellow fought like the mischief, and so did I, as I knew that it would go hard with me if he got the best of me.

"Yet I didn't aim to hurt the rascal much, as I only tried to overpower him or stun him for the time, so that he could not injure me."

While fighting at such close quarters we could not use the whip or stick very much, and I soon dropped my weapon while I grasped at his with one hand so as to keep him from hitting me with it.

I thought I was able for any young fellow of size at the time, but I tell you he gave me enough of it at first, and no mistake.

And I candidly admit that I believe that he would have licked me if he had been in the same condition as I was.

As it happened, however, I got the best of him at last, and I stood over him as he lay in the snow, with my foot planted on his breast and the whip upraised as I cried:

"I have got you now, Bob Ferris."

The disguised wretch was gasping for breath as he glared up at me and muttered:

"Yes, Dennis Driscoll, you have got the best of me, and I am a goner."

The poor fellow closed his eyes, and I could hear his breast heaving under me, as he moaned forth:

"I am played out, and you can lug me to jail as soon as you like."

I thought he might be foxing at the time with the view of

giving me a sly knock when off my guard, and so I picked up his stick and flung it away as far as I could, as I responded:

"Of course I will have to take you to jail, but I'll break your head first if you attempt to turn on me again."

I had picked up my good whip the moment I got the best of him, and I still held the heavy end up over him as I spoke, while I was very much puzzled at the same time as to how I should manage in getting into the village.

The truth was that I pitied the poor rogue in my inmost heart, and the brave way in which he had fought me made me admire him the more.

As I kept my foot on his breast I felt that he was becoming quieter and quieter, and then I turned pale myself, as I gasped forth:

"Mercy on me! I hope in goodness I haven't killed the poor rascal!"

I then fell on my knees and rubbed his face with the snow till the black stuff thereon came off, while I kept groaning to myself:

"Heaven preserve me from having the life of the poor fellow to answer for, bad as he was and I would give my right hand to see him open his eyes and speak to me again."

Bob Ferris did open his eyes at the moment, giving a great sigh at the same time, as he gasped forth:

"It is all up with me, I know, but if you have a heart in you at all take me to the village at once and give me something to eat and drink."

I then remarked that he spoke with the Irish brogue as natural as possible, while he used the negro dialect before we commenced the fight.

Without waiting to think of the consequences, I lifted the poor fellow into the wagon, jumped in beside him, and drove off as I said to him:

"I won't leave you to die like a dog anyhow, whatever your faults may be."

Bob looked at me as we rattled along through the snow, and he asked:

"Do you think that I meant to lay you out when I asked for a ride to the village?"

"To be sure I do."

"I swear to goodness you were wrong, and bad cess to me if I thought only of getting to some shelter for the night and some grub, as I am nearly starving as a fellow can be, as I didn't have anything to eat for nearly two days and nights."

"Who are you going to in the village?" I asked, thinking of young Rogers the while.

"What's the use in telling you, now, as I ain't going to give any one away."

"Then why did you betray your own mother the night you were taken?"

The young rogue was recovering a good deal and a kind of a merry laugh came from him before he replied:

"Why did I give the old woman away? Why, 'cause she deserved it, you can bet."

"But if she is your mother, you should be true to her, whatever she is," I said, thinking of drawing the young rogue out.

"I don't know whether she is my mother or not, but if she is, I ain't got to thank her for much, you can bet, or I would never give her away."

Not trusting the young rogue, I kept myself in readiness to pounce on him again, as I asked:

"Did you ever know your father?"

A merrier chuckle broke from the young fellow ere he replied:

"Of course I know him; and you can bet that he is the right sort, if he is crooked."

"What is his name?"

"I am called after him and I look just like him, only I am not quite as much of a Mick."

"Was he married to Mrs. James, and do you think that she is your real mother?"

"Why, I always thought so, as we all lived together down in York until he got into a bad scrape and was sent to prison. Then the old woman shook me and became respectable when she married Professor James."

"Were you born in Ireland?" I asked.

"Not much. I was born and reared down in the Fourth Ward, New York, but the old man is Irish, and he has got the brogue on him yet as thick as mud."

"Is he in prisop now?"

"Not he, that I knows of. But what are you asking me all these questions about; and what are you going to do with me?"

I pondered a moment or so before I replied by asking:

"Do you ever think of turning over a new leaf if you had a chance?"

The rogue shrugged his shoulders and grinned before he replied:

"I never got no chance, and it ain't likely I will now, so there is no use in putting such a question to me."

"But supposing I were to let you off now, and give you a chance to mend, would you promise me to try your hand at being a good boy?"

The fellow looked at me as if he thought I was humbugging him, and then he asked:

"What are you giving me, Dennis Driscoll?"

"I mean what I say," I earnestly replied, as I pulled up outside the village. "If you will promise me to try and be a good boy, I will let you off, as I hate to be the one to send you back to prison."

The young rogue still stared at me, as if he believed that I was only humbugging him, and I could then see another angry flash in his eyes, while he cried:

"Look here, young fellow, don't be piling water on a drowned rat. You got the best of me to-night because I was played out, and you can do it again, but I want you to know that I won't be in the stone jug forever, and I'll lay you out as soon as I ever get out if you don't drop that game now."

Putting my hand in my pocket I drew out some little change I had of my own and handed it to him, as I said:

"I am not humbugging you, my poor fellow, as I pity you from my heart. If you have any friends in the village go to them for a shelter to-night, and I only wish that I could help you more, and that you will become a good boy hereafter."

The young rogue grabbed the money and sprang out of the wagon, as he replied:

"May I never have a day's luck if I don't remember this turn for you, Dennis Driscoll. And now I want to give you one advice."

"What is that?"

"Look out for young Well Rogers, as he has sworn to lay you out somehow."

I looked earnestly at the chap, and I held my hand out to him as I asked:

"Will you tell me if young Well Rogers belonged to your crowd?"

He shook his head very seriously, and turned to walk away as he replied:

"I am not giving any one away just now, but I may see you later."

He then sprang over the fence and soon disappeared in the gloom, while I drove on muttering to myself:

"I know that I was a fool to-night, but hang me if I could help it. That poor fellow has some good in him, and I would never forgive myself if I was the means of sending him back to prison after he made such a brave effort to get away."

I was troubled enough that night over the meeting, and fool that I was, I didn't tell a single soul about it.

I dreamed about Bob Ferris and his black face all night long, and I thought about him on the following day while studying at the academy.

Every moment I expected to hear that he was arrested

again, and that he would tell all about my adventure with him; and yet I had some confidence in the fellow's honor.

Three days passed away and I didn't see or hear anything more of the young rogue, while I hoped that he went to New York to lead a different life.

On the third night after meeting with the escaped convict, Mr. Townsend went away to the city of New York, and I was left alone in the house with his housekeeper and the servant girl.

I spent the evening with my father and mother, and it was after ten o'clock when I let myself in with a latch-key and stole quietly into bed.

I had queer dreams that night, but I will not attempt to describe them, as my adventures on awaking were stranger still.

Just at daylight I was aroused by a loud ringing at the door bell, and I hurried on with my clothes, thinking that it was Mr. Townsend, who had returned unexpectedly on some important business.

When I got down-stairs the servant girl had just opened the door, and then two men pushed into the hallway, while one of them cried:

"Where is Dennis Driscoll?"

"Here I am," I answered.

The two men sprang at me on the instant, and each of them grabbed me by the shoulder, as one of them cried:

"We arrest you for highway robbery, Driscoll, and you will come with us at once."

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW CHARGE AGAINST ME.

The moment I heard the charge against me, I felt in my heart that Bob Ferris was the cause of getting me into the new scrape.

The two men who arrested me were the constables of the village, and they both knew me right well.

If it had been the first time that I was thus suddenly accused of a crime, I suppose I would have been terribly frightened, innocent as I was; but I must say I was prepared for some such trick.

The meeting with Bob Ferris, my terrible dreams, and the presentiment that was hanging over me, all served to prepare me in a measure, yet how could I avoid shuddering, for all that?

I must have taken the matter very cool, however, as I hear the constables afterward remark that I was a sharp custom, and that they were disappointed in my conduct.

Realizing where the mischief came from, I didn't ask many questions of the two men, but I turned to the servant girl, saying:

"Molly, be kind enough to bring me down my overcoat and hat, and then please telegraph to Mr. Townsend that I am in trouble."

"But sure you didn't do it at all!" cried Molly, who was a kindly creature.

I smiled in a confident manner and then replied:

"You may swear I didn't, Molly. Don't tell my people anything about it until Mr. Townsend comes back."

I then noticed the two constables grinning in a peculiar manner as we stood under the lamplight in the hallway, and one of them remarked:

"The old folks may know all about it sooner than you think."

Early as it was in the morning, several persons soon assembled outside the door of the house, and then in marched old Rogers with a wicked grin on his face as he cried:

"And so the Irish hound is at it again. I knew he would be found out in the long run, for give a rogue enough rope and you may be certain that he will hang himself in the end."

I had become a little more dignified in my manner since I had occasion to talk to the old bully last, and I replied in quiet tones:

"Mr. Rogers, you are not much of a man, or you would not talk that way, even if you were certain of my guilt, which I do not believe you are."

The constables interrupted any further conversation by one of them saying:

"We must search his room, and I ask you, Mr. Rogers, to watch the prisoner while we do it."

Before I knew where I was they clapped my hands together and slipped the handcuffs on my wrists.

Then old Rogers grabbed me by the shoulder and shook his fist at my head, as he cried:

"I'll fix him if he attempts to stir until you come down again."

Four or five others of the villagers had then entered the hallway, and I turned to them, crying:

"Gentlemen, I call on you to protect me from this man, as I feel that he will try to kill me if he gets the least chance. I am innocent, as I was before, and I believe that he knows it."

Two of the gentlemen who knew me well then stepped forward, and one of them said:

"See here, Rogers, I don't think there is any occasion to be so rough on Driscoll, as I for one will be responsible for him."

"And so will I!" cried the other.

Old Rogers glared at me in a strange manner as he grumbled forth:

"All right, gentlemen. The cove got off before by tricks, but you can bet that he won't get off this time."

I turned away with a look of disgust and took a seat in the broad hallway to wait until the search of the officers was over.

It was all I could do to keep my temper with old Rogers, and I felt that I would make a kick at him or strike him with my handcuffed hands if he said much more to me.

As if to add to my mortification, young Well soon came into the hallway and glared at me in triumph as he cried:

"They have got the old Irish robber, too, and we will send the two Micks up together."

Forgetting myself, I sprang to my feet as I demanded:

"What do you mean?"

"The old Greek, your father, of course. How green you pretend to be when you want to, but it won't work this time."

And the young rascal laughed scornfully, while my heart rose to my mouth as I turned to one of the gentlemen present and asked:

"Is it possible that my father is accused also?"

"I believe it is," replied the gentleman.

"What are we accused of, sir?"

"Of robbing Mr. Dobson, the paymaster of the branch road, as he was on his way home last night."

I gasped for breath, and my heart was beating violently as I asked:

"Who makes the charge against me?"

"Mr. Dobson himself. He recognized you both when the wind blew the masks off your faces after you thought you had him knocked senseless. Did you find anything in his bedroom, officers?"

The two constables came down at the moment, and one of them replied:

"Not a thing."

"Of course not," cried Well Rogers. "He is not green enough, if he is a Mick, to bring the stuff home here to give him away."

The day was breaking as they led me away to the house of the justice of the peace.

There I found my poor father in the charge of three or four of the citizens of the village, and I'll never forget the expression on his face as he looked at old Rogers, and cried:

"This is some more of your dirty work, I'll be bound, but it

is a long lane that has no turning, and you will suffer for it all yet."

Old Rogers laughed scornfully, and so did the son, while the former cried:

"The old Greek is bluffing it out like the young one, but it is all up with the pair of them this time, and I'll bet my pile on it."

"How much will you bet?" cried a manly voice.

And Mr. Townsend forced his way through the crowd that had assembled in the office.

"Anything you like," cried old Rogers.

"Order, gentlemen," cried the justice of the peace. "I am prepared to examine the prisoner."

I can't tell much about the examination, as it appeared to me as if I was in a kind of a dream all through it, while my mind was actively at work.

From what Bob Ferris had told me, I suspected that he and his father were the real criminals, and that they both resembled us enough in looks and voices to have Mr. Dobson take them for us.

The paymaster knew my father well, and he swore that he was attacked by two masked men while on his way home to the hill, about three o'clock on the previous night.

After they knocked him down senseless, as they supposed, they proceeded to take the money from him, which was over two thousand dollars in bills that he had to pay the hands on the road on the following day.

Mr. Dobson declared that he couldn't have been senseless more than a few moments, and when he did come to he kept still, fearing that the robbers would kill him if he let on he knew them.

While the robbers were taking away the money a gust of wind swept along and blew the black crape from their faces.

Then it was that he recognized the rascals, and he also swore positively that he knew our voices well, even before he saw our faces.

The paymaster did not show the least spiteful feeling against either of us, as he gave his evidence just like any honest man would who was firmly convinced that he was stating the truth.

As I heard that evidence how I did blame myself for not saying a word to any one about meeting with Bob Ferris, and yet I can't say that I upbraided myself much for letting that young rogue get away.

If I had only myself to suffer for it, I believe that I would do the same over again, as it would go against my grain to hound down any poor wretch who was in such a sad plight as he was that night.

We were both committed to the county jail, as no one offered to go bail for us, and we did not expect it.

Mr. Townsend still stuck to us, however, and he soon got a chance of having a confidential talk with me as our lawyer.

I at once told the good man about my meeting with Bob Ferris and what followed after.

He shook his head in a very serious manner when I told him that I believed the robbery had been committed by Bob and his father, and he then said to me:

"That story would never go down with a jury, Dennis, unless we can produce the father and son, and they resemble your father and yourself very much. You certainly got out of the other trouble all right, but the mere fact of your having been accused before will weigh against you now."

I shuddered as I heard the plain truth thus presented to me, and I then said:

"We can certainly prove, sir, that we have led honest lives since we first came to this village, and who can say a word to my poor father?"

"If your father can prove that he was elsewhere at the time the robbery was committed, he will be all right," answered the lawyer. "Did the folks in the house hear you getting in last night?"

"I don't think they did, sir, as I went in very easily, so as not to disturb them."

He then turned to question my father; and we were both dismayed when the old man confessed that he couldn't prove that he was elsewhere at the time either.

The truth was, my father left me the night before to go to a wake on the outskirts of the village.

He admitted that he drank a little too much in a tavern near the wake-house, and that he started for home a little before twelve o'clock.

Not caring to let my mother see that he was under the influence, the old man walked around the village for over an hour before going to the house, and it was just about that time that the robbery was committed.

So it can be readily seen that neither of us could prove an alibi, and our only hope of getting off was to produce the real criminals with the money in their possession, so that the paymaster could see how he had made the mistake.

Mr. Townsend took up my idea of the affair at once, and he believed that we were innocent; but I must own that I couldn't blame other people under the circumstances, for believing us guilty.

While I am talking in this strain I may just as well mention that there was one other person who had faith in me still.

That person was Edna James, and she let me know before the d— was over that she not only believed me innocent, but that she strongly suspected who the guilty parties were.

Mr. Townsend told the justice in confidence about my meeting with Bob Ferris, and he called to his mind the remarkable resemblance between us, which had been noticed before on the night of the attempted robbery at the academy.

The justice admitted that the likeness was remarkable, and that it was possible for the escaped young convict to be one of the robbers, but he couldn't conceive how the father of the culprit could resemble my old man so much also.

However, secret measures were taken by Mr. Townsend to arrest Bob Ferris and his father, if possible, and Mr. Tom Jones, the New York detective who had befriended me before, was sent for again.

When I was only twenty-four hours in the jail I begged Mr. Townsend to get me out on bail, as I said to him:

"I believe in my heart, sir, that if I was free to act I would soon clear my father and myself, as I have an idea how to go to work if I could only put it in force."

"What do you propose to do, Dennis?"

"To find Bob Ferris and his father with some of the money on them and to show the people, and Mr. Dobson in particular, how they were mistaken."

I was so earnest in my request, and in my belief that Mr. Townsend did succeed in getting me out on bail that afternoon; but my poor father was still kept in confinement at his own request.

I got back to the village that night so disguised that my own mother wouldn't know me.

Taking a hint from Bob Ferris I fixed myself up as a black man, and I had been intimate with Ajax long enough to suit his way of speaking.

When I reached the village in the darkness of the night, I had no clear idea in my mind as to how I was to set about accomplishing my object, but something whispered to me that my double was still in the neighborhood, and that I could make him act a manly part if I once got my hands and my tongue on him.

The first person I called on in my disguise was Ajax, and didn't I take a "rise out of him" before I let him know who I was.

The experiment thus tried with my negro friend proved to me that my disguise was excellent, and that there was little or no danger of my being recognized either by friends or foes in the village.

Taking Ajax with me from the academy, we proceeded to-

ward old Rogers' house in the village, which was reported to be a rendezvous for the wild young fellows in the neighborhood.

The reason of my going to the place that night was that I heard it rumored that young Well Rogers had been seen near there with two strangers, and I couldn't get it out of my head that he was plotting and planning against me in my present trouble.

A strong feeling was on me also that I would soon meet with Bob Ferris again, and that he would aid me in getting out of the scrape.

Of course I didn't expect that the young rogue would give himself up willingly to clear me, yet I had a feeling that there was some manhood in him, although it may take some hard rubbing to draw it out.

As we walked along together I told Ajax what my purpose was in visiting Rogers' house, and we were both prepared with good weapons in case of need.

Ajax was well acquainted with the colored cook working for Rogers, and he was often in the habit of paying her a visit in the kitchen of an evening.

On going in the back way and knocking at the door, the cook, who was a stout old colored woman, invited us in at once and offered us seats.

On casting my eyes around I soon saw a door leading into a back room, which had a glass opening at the top, and over which hung a reddish screen.

At the moment when my eyes fell on the door the screen was moved aside, and a face appeared there which I did not expect to see.

It was the face of a hard-featured woman, and I at once recognized it as that of Mrs. James.

Although apparently as quiet as possible, my heart thumped against my side at the moment, for I felt that her son was not far off either.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLAYING THE DETECTIVE.

Ajax did not make any attempt at disguising himself, and there was nothing unusual in his appearing at the house.

As the big negro was a leader of the colored sports in the village and their champion in all athletic games as well, he was very popular with his friends, several of whom visited Rogers' house.

He soon introduced me as an old friend up from Brooklyn, who was looking for work, and I had all the appearance of a rough colored man of thirty years of age.

Of course, I knew that Mrs. James would recognize Ajax, but I felt positive that it would take even keener eyes than she possessed to detect myself in the disguise I had assumed.

The colored cook was soon summoned into the back room and then I knew that the spiteful woman inside was about to make inquiries concerning Ajax.

I was not at all alarmed at that, for the reasons already explained, as I knew that the cook would tell her that the big negro often appeared there.

As the cook was coming out from the back room again I heard an uproarious voice inside, as if some drunken fellow was singing in a discordant voice, and I then said to myself:

"That's Bob Ferris himself, as sure as death, and I'll wager my life that he is drunk, or making believe to be, for some reason."

When the cook came out again there was a broad smile on her face and she addressed Ajax with a grin as she said to him:

"There is a lady inside there, old fellow, who wants to talk to you."

My colored friend had not seen the face at the glass door,

and I had no chance to give him a hint, so he answered with some surprise:

"All right, aunty. Does de lady wants us in there to take tea wid her? You see I am got an ole friend wid me."

"Bring your friend in with you," answered the cook as she moved back to the door again.

I nudged Ajax to accept the offer, and we both followed the woman into the back room.

Ajax was very much surprised when he saw Mrs. James, who arose to address him in friendly tones, saying:

"How are you, Ajax? I suppose you are surprised to see me here?"

The big negro grinned and chuckled, and I saw that he was fearfully confused as he replied:

"You bet I is, Missa James."

"Hush, hush, and don't mention my name here," protested the spiteful woman as she handed a bank bill to my colored friend. "How are they all up in the academy, and how is Susan in particular?"

"Fust rate, missa."

The woman then went on to ask various questions in as cool a manner as if she had left the academy with flying colors, while I took a back seat and kept my eyes and ears open.

My eyes soon showed me a rough-looking fellow about my own size seated in the corner with his head down on his breast, and he mumbling away to himself like a drunken man who had just been aroused from a sound sleep.

The face of the fellow was stained with black stuff of some kind, and so were his hands, while I could readily perceive that he wore a false beard and a wig.

My ears told me that the voice was familiar to me, and I soon made up my mind that I was in the presence of Bob Ferris.

I was wondering what object Mrs. James could have in making herself known to the big negro, who had never been a favorite with her when she was mistress at the academy, but I soon saw what she was aiming at.

The woman appeared to be very poor indeed, as far as you could judge from her clothes, and yet she gave Ajax money.

"I have been an abused woman," she said, "and I came up here now to compel Professor James to do me justice."

Bob Ferris was glaring around at us at the moment, and when he heard the words thus uttered by his mother he growled forth:

"Stop that kind of talk, old wóman, and let us have another cigar."

A cigar was readily placed before the young rogue, and I could soon perceive that it was the woman's object to keep him in good humor.

The young rogue had perceived Ajax, however, and he at once staggered over toward him, sobering himself up a little as he cried:

"Hello, old fellow, I think I have struck on you somewhere before."

"I don't 'member you, sah."

The woman sprang up almost on the instant, and pushed her troublesome son back into the chair, as she said to Ajax:

"Don't mind that foolish fellow. He is a friend of mine in my present poverty, and he has been taking a little too much lately."

Bob Ferris kept staring at the big negro, and I could see that he was sobering up more and more, while he raised his voice again as he cried:

"I say, old fellow, do you know a young fellow living around here called Dennis Driscoll? I tell you he's a trump, if ever there was one in this world."

I thought that the woman would interfere at the moment, but she did not, and Ajax gave a sly wink at me as he replied:

"I knows a Dennis Driscoll what lived around here, but he ain't no good."

"Why-ain't he?"

"'Cause he am up for robbery."

"The mischief he is!" cried Bob Ferris, as he strode toward the negro again. "Do you mean the young fellow what worked up at de academy?"

"That am de young fellah what I does mean."

Bob Ferris slapped his hands on the negro's shoulder and stared hard into his eyes, as he demanded:

"What did you say he is up for?"

"For highway robbery."

"When did it happen?"

"A couple of nights agone."

"Who did he rob?"

"Massa Dobson, the paymaster of de railroad what libs up on de hill."

A fierce glare appeared in Bob's eyes and he shook the big negro, as he demanded:

"Who says Dennis Driscoll did that job, I would like to know?"

Ajax then told him how and when I was accused with my father, and that we were both then in the county jail to await trial.

When my negro friend had concluded, Bob Ferris staggered back to his chair and bent his head on his breast again as he exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be hanged if this isn't a queer go, and no mistake."

I was watching the woman closely the while, and I was very much puzzled at the way in which she acted.

She did not make the least effort to stop Ajax in telling the story, but, on the other hand, she appeared to encourage him.

It was very evident to me that what Bob Ferris then heard was all news to him, but I could see that the woman was well posted in our affairs beforehand.

What could be her object, then, in introducing Ajax and myself, and allowing the big negro to tell her rogue of a son about our arrest.

I would have given the world at the moment to be able to question Bob myself, and to find out if he had really anything to do with the robbery.

While I was thus ruminating an inner door opened and out came a man muffed almost up to the eyes with the collar of his overcoat, while a soft felt hat was drawn down over his forehead.

The stranger nodded to the woman in a surly manner without saying a word, cast a suspicious glance at the big negro and myself, and he then bent his eyes on Bob Ferris as he grumbled forth:

"Hasn't this chap sobered up yet?"

I started on hearing the voice, and it was well for me that the others were not observing me at the moment.

I even sprang up from my seat in surprise, and I would have advanced to speak to the stranger only that Ajax turned and winked at me, saying:

"Sit down, ole fellah, an' take a cup of coffee 'fore we goes."

Ajax was playing his part better than I was, as he had also noticed the voice, as he afterward told me, and he could have sworn that it was my father who was speaking to Bob Ferris.

That young rogue shook himself at the moment and glared up at the muffled stranger, saying:

"I say, old man, did you hear anything about a job performed about here lately?"

"What sort of a job, Bob?"

"Robbing a paymaster?"

The stranger chuckled to himself a little, and then turned another suspicious glance at us before he replied, in surly tones:

"Why, of course I heard about it, and you would have heard about it also if you hadn't been on a spree so long; but what have we got to do with that?"

"Did you know that a young fellow named Dennis Driscoll has been jugged for the work, father?"

"Well, what of that? I don't know any Dennis Driscoll around here."

Bob Ferris rubbed his head, and he then took some water and dashed it in his own face as he grumbled forth:

"The mischief take me if I don't sober up now, and I want to have a talk with you, old man."

The young fellow then rubbed his face with a soiled handkerchief, caught his father by the arm and drew him suddenly toward the back door as he said to him in somewhat agitated tones:

"I want to have a square talk with you, old man."

They then retired from the room, and I could hear them moving up the stairway, while I turned and watched Mrs. James as I said to myself:

"I'll be hanged if I can make out the mystery at all. Bob Ferris acts to me as if he had nothing to do with the robbery, and that man, whoever he is, can't be my father's brother, or he wouldn't take it so easy about us, if he had any nature in him at all."

Mrs. James did not seem to be at all troubled about the affair I was so interested in, and she went on to coax Ajax into taking up a secret message to the professor.

When I saw that she took no interest in my affair I didn't pay much attention to her, but I did keep my ears on the alert for the return of the others.

While we were thus engaged the door leading into the kitchen was opened, and in came another man, who was also muffled up to the eyes.

On seeing Ajax the new-comer started a little, and he then advanced to speak to him, saying:

"Hello, Ajax! Have you come around to see the cook again?"

I started again on hearing that voice, as I at once recognized the speaker as my old enemy, Well Rogers.

The young rascal did not seem to be a bit abashed at Ajax recognizing him, and he also addressed Mrs. James in friendly tones, saying:

"How are you, Mrs. James? Ain't you afraid of Ajax giving you away?"

Before the woman could reply Ajax answered in angry tones:

"I ain't on that lay, Massa Rogers, and you can just gamble dat it am not a poor lady I would be de fust to turn on nowow."

Before any more could be said, heavy steps were heard on the stairs, and then Bob Ferris burst into the room followed by his father, while the young fellow cried:

"I tell you I won't stand it, and I do know what I am about. That young fellow was a friend to me when I wanted one badly, and bust me if I am going to see him imposed on now."

The young fellow appeared to recognize Well Rogers for the first time at the moment, and he made a sudden spring at him and caught him by the throat, as he cried, in furious tones:

"This is some more of your work, Well Rogers, but I'll be hanged if I don't block your game if I have to go back to the jug for it."

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT.

Bob Ferris had scarcely seized Well Rogers when the young rogue's father sprang at him and caught him very roughly by the back of the neck, as he cried:

"Hang you for a fool, will you ever get sober again and act like a man?"

The old man then flung Bob back and forced him into the chair with extraordinary strength, while he turned to Well Rogers, crying:

"You get out of here for the present, and keep your mouth shut."

Well Rogers turned to the door as he grumbled forth:

"I would like to know what he has got against me, to treat me in that manner?"

"Don't you see that he is on a spree," replied the old man, "and why don't you let him alone until I manage him? Get out of here, I say, until I am certain what he is driving at."

The old man then cast his eyes on us, and then looked at Mrs. James with angry frowns as he demanded, in surly tones:

"What are these black fellows doing here, and are they friends of yours?"

Mrs. James looked a little frightened, glancing at Ajax as she answered:

"That big man was employed up at the academy, and he was going to take a message there for me."

I kept watching the man while he was struggling with Bob Ferris, in the hope of getting a look at his face, but he kept himself well muffled all through, as if anxious not to be recognized.

I did notice, however, that he was about the same size as my father, that his voice resembled the old man's very much, and that they had the same dark, flashing eyes when excited.

It was evident that Bob Ferris was cooling down again under the influence of the man whom I believed to be his father, as the young fellow sat quietly again as he grumbled forth:

"It is not a fair game nohow, and you will say so, old man, when you know more about it."

Well Rogers had reached the door to go out into the front room, when he turned to address the old man again, saying:

"I would like to have a talk with you outside, sir."

"I'll be out there pretty soon when I get this young fellow quieted down more, and I want you all to know that I won't have any rowing here."

Giving Ajax a hint we both retreated out into the yard, when Well Rogers was on the street talking to some of the wild young fellows of the village.

I was very much puzzled at the whole business, as I couldn't understand what my young enemy was up to, and I was equally at a loss how to account for the actions of the spiteful woman.

Then the words and acts of Bob Ferris puzzled me very much also.

While it was very evident that he wanted to save me, I had my doubts as to whether he had anything to do with the robbing of the paymaster at all.

As Ajax had not attempted any disguise, young Rogers had recognized him from the start, and I could not comprehend why the young rascal treated my black friend as he did.

I knew right well that he was down on Ajax for having backed me to beat him, and I didn't suppose that he would like to be seen with the others in his own house.

As I felt perfectly safe in my own disguise, I was anxious to remain and learn all I could, but I did not care to get my negro friend into serious trouble, as I dreaded that Well Rogers would soon get some of his wild friends to attack him.

When we reached the street, however, Well Rogers approached Ajax and addressed him in the most friendly tones, crying:

"Come around to the tavern, old fellow, and have a drink, and bring your friend with you."

Receiving a nudge from me Ajax accepted the offer, although he also imagined that the treacherous young rascal was laying some kind of a trap for him.

Then I thought that perhaps Well Rogers desired to be friends with Ajax, and that he was sincere enough in his present offer.

The mere fact of Mrs. James and the strangers being present in the house, and that Well Rogers was there, too, with them, was something in our favor, but it was not enough for me.

It was necessary to prove that others had committed the robbery for which we were arrested, and I did hope to show that Well Rogers was intimately acquainted with them at least.

If we could only smuggle Bob Ferris away from his friends for a time, a great deal could be accomplished through him I firmly believed.

So far as I could see the young fellow's father, if the stranger was his father, would prove to be the most dangerous customer yet appearing on the scene, as it was evident that he possessed a vigorous and daring mind as well as a powerful body.

After Ajax and I had swallowed a harmless drink each at a tavern, Well Rogers addressed my black friend, saying:

"I suppose you feel bad about your friend Dennis Driscoll, Ajax, but I want you to know that I don't bear any grudge against you on his account."

Ajax grinned and nudged me slightly as he replied in friendly tones:

"Why, see har, Massa Rogers, I did think as how yous was down on me for backing Dennis in de fight, but that was all on the squah."

Clapping the big negro on the shoulder in the most patronizing manner, young Rogers responded, saying:

"That's all right, old fellow. You and him worked together and you had a perfect right to back him, but you can bet your life that he couldn't lick me again if we had to try it over. Now that he is up for a bad job I don't believe in throwing water on him, and I am not going to, for he has a hard road to travel."

Ajax coincided with the last remark, as it was not his place or our policy for him to defend me at the time.

My black friend was decent enough, however, to say that he always took me for an honest boy, but that the proof against me then was too strong to be refuted.

I encouraged Ajax to talk about myself and thus gain time, as I felt that it was all important for us to see more of the characters at Rogers' house.

The muffled stranger came into the place while they were talking, and as he passed out into the street again he spoke to Well Rogers in gruff tones, saying:

"Come out and take a walk with me, young fellow, as I want to see you."

The young rogue hastened out as he said to Ajax in friendly tones:

"I will see you again, old fellow."

I would have given a good deal to have followed them at the time and listened to what they had to say, but it was more important that we should return to the house and get a chance at Bob Ferris.

I gave Ajax a hint or two, and he went back there again to see Mrs. James, as if forgetting the message she had given him to take up to the professor.

I followed Ajax back to the house, but I was very much disappointed at not finding Bob Ferris there.

While Ajax was receiving a second message to the professor, which was merely a demand on him for some money, I noticed the woman more closely, and I felt assured that she was in an impoverished state.

Then I reasoned that she could not have been implicated with those who had robbed the paymaster, and that her young rogue of a son was not in that business either.

Then who could it have been that the paymaster had recognized as resembling me so much, both in voice and in appearance?

While I was pondering over the question Ajax was speaking to Mrs. James about the robbery, and the spiteful woman said of me:

"That Dennis Driscoll was a smart young fellow to get out of the scrape the other time and throw the blame on me, but I knew that he would get found out in the long run, and per-

haps the people around won't think so bad of me now as they did."

Ajax nodded his head and remarked:

"That am so, missa; but it am mighty strange that yous son happens around here again just about dis time."

The spiteful woman started at the suggestion and stared at the big negro as she demanded:

"Who do you mean by my son?"

"Bob Ferris, of course."

An indignant frown appeared on the woman's face as she responded:

"That young wretch is not my son, although I confess that I was once married to his father. His father was sent to prison long ago, and I was divorced from him. The young rascal always hated me, and you saw how quickly he denounced me that night at the academy."

The big negro grinned and nodded before he inquired:

"Where am de old man now?"

The woman looked cautiously around before she whispered to Ajax, saying:

"He was here a short time ago, and you saw him keeping his son quiet. I don't know what they are doing up here, but they are no friends of mine now, and I would be only too glad to see the pair of them in prison again."

I did not pretend to hear the words muttered, but you may be certain that they affected me very much, and I said to myself:

"This spiteful, cunning woman may be only humbugging Ajax for some reason, or she may be in deadly earnest. If she is telling the truth she may be of great use to us, and we must watch her."

At that moment I heard footsteps on the stairs again, and then down into the room came Bob Ferris, wearing a good overcoat, but otherwise disguised as he appeared on the night when I encountered him on the high road.

The young rogue passed out into the yard without taking any notice of either of us, and I could see that Ajax did not recognize him in his blackened face, and with the gray wig and whiskers.

As I was sitting near the door I could see Bob Ferris speaking to some one out on the sidewalk, and I could notice that he was thoroughly sobered in some way.

I gave a slight signal to Ajax to follow me as I passed out into the yard, and the disguised young rogue walked along the street at the same time.

After addressing a few words to Ajax, I slipped out on the street after Bob Ferris, and when I saw him going in the direction of the depot, I said to myself:

"He is going to leave the village, and now is my time to be at him."

I moved along after Bob Ferris in a careless manner, and I knew that Ajax would not be far behind me in case of trouble.

The young rogue had not proceeded far along the deserted streets when he met Well Rogers and his muffled father, and he stopped to speak to them.

Then I was more surprised than ever to see Bob Ferris shaking hands with young Rogers in the most friendly manner, while I slipped behind the fence to watch them.

The three friends did not remain together, as Bob Ferris kept on his way in the direction of the depot, while his father and Well Rogers returned toward the house.

Ajax soon met the latter, and Well Rogers addressed him, crying:

"Going home, old fellow?"

"Yes, sah," replied my black friend, as he passed on.

I hastened along behind the fence, keeping Bob Ferris in sight, and I soon joined Ajax as he turned out of a street leading toward the depot.

"What am you after dat old coon for?" inquired Ajax, as I stepped on by his side.

"Why, that is Bob Ferris," I replied, "and I am going to ar-

rest him and take him up to the stable until we grab the old man, also."

Ajax stared at me and grinned from ear to ear, as he rejoined:

"You must be crazy. I just seed de young fellow talking to Mrs. James in de kitchen before I left, and he was having a row with her in de back room afore he came out."

I was startled by the words of the big negro, as I knew he was a keen fellow and not easily mistaken.

As we hastened along after the man I took to be Bob Ferris, I made up my mind as to what we should do, and Ajax agreed with me.

It was very evident that the fellow was hastening to the depot, and I knew that a train passed for New York in about fifteen minutes.

Pretending to be going in the same direction Ajax and I hastened on together, and as we neared the depot he started on a run, as he cried back to me:

"Hurry up, ole man, or you will lose de train."

I did hurry up, and we were soon close on the stranger, who did not appear to entertain the least suspicion of our movements.

As we were passing the fellow I suddenly put out my leg to trip him up, and Ajax gave him a shove from behind at the same moment.

We then pounced on him together and proceeded to bind and gag him, while I hissed into his ear, saying:

"I am an officer from New York, and I am after you, Bob Ferris."

The fellow did struggle in the snow like a madman, but Ajax held him while I slipped on a gag and tied his arms behind him.

I then presented a revolver at his head as I said to him:

"Come along quietly now, or it will be the worse for you, Bob Ferris."

The fellow did not offer any resistance after that, and we dragged him along toward the academy, while I gave Ajax a few private orders.

The big negro was positive that he had left Bob Ferris in the house, and I was equally as certain that we were dealing with the escaped convict who had fought with me three nights before the robbery.

We reached the academy grounds without meeting any one, and the moment we got into the stable we secured our prisoner by tying him to one of the posts.

Ajax then hastened out and brought in his wife, who was anxiously awaiting us in the kitchen.

In their presence I drew the wig and the false beard from the fellow's face, and we washed the black stuff from his features soon after.

Then you should have seen Ajax and his wife stare at those features, while they both exclaimed:

"That he was the dead image of Dennis Driscoll!"

CHAPTER XV.

SOME MORE SURPRISES.

Up to that time I had not betrayed myself in any way to the stranger, and my colored friends spoke of me as being still in prison.

I then sent Ajax down to the village for Lawyer Townsend, and to bring the paymaster along at the same time, if possible.

I pretended to the prisoner that I was a detective from New York, and I posted Ajax as to what he should say to the others on the way up.

The prisoner was a little dumfounded when Ajax left us and I removed the gag from his mouth as I said to him:

"You see, Bob Ferris, that we have got you in a tight place, and you are certain to go back to Sing Sing."

The young rogue gave a defiant laugh, and then replied in sneering tones:

"You are pretty smart, but I can just tell you that you ain't got Bob Ferris yet."

I wasn't sure on that point myself, as I thought of several things while Ajax was away that puzzled me very much indeed.

In the first place, the real Bob Ferris was quite drunk half an hour before, and the fellow before me was as sober as a judge.

The prisoner appeared to be on very friendly terms with Well Rogers, while the real Bob Ferris had attacked him in the room back of the kitchen.

Then Ajax was still positive that he saw and heard Bob Ferris just before leaving the kitchen, while I had the prisoner in sight at the same moment out in the street of the village.

I had noticed Bob Ferris well on the night when he was taken prisoner for the affair at the academy, and thereafter when he was on trial, and it was easy to see that the prisoner bore a strong resemblance to him.

Both Ajax and his wife could testify to the same resemblance, and they were very well satisfied that the prisoner resembled me.

I didn't like to say much to the fellow until the lawyer arrived, and great was my joy when Ajax returned, bringing my good friend with him, and young Marcus and the paymaster as well.

Ajax had told them that I was a New York detective, and he also informed them that we had not yet searched the prisoner.

Mr. Dobson, the paymaster, was very much surprised when he took a careful look at the prisoner, and he at once declared that he did resemble me very much.

He was still more surprised when we searched the rogue and found a gold watch and nearly a thousand dollars in bills in his possession.

The paymaster recognized the watch as his own, and he felt certain that the money was a portion of the sum taken from him by the robbers.

After having gained so much, I called Mr. Townsend outside and told him who I was.

He praised me very highly for my success so far; but when I told him that I hoped to capture the man who looked like my father also, he grabbed me by both hands as he said:

"Dennis, you will make a great criminal lawyer, or a good detective. If you succeed as you say, your father will be a free man to-morrow, and I think Well Rogers will be in a bad scrape as well."

After consulting with the paymaster, it was agreed that two of us should take the prisoner down to the house of the justice of the peace, and that Ajax and I should go in quest of the old robber.

We had managed the arrest so carefully that we felt sure no one else in the village could hear about it, and we made up our minds to keep it a secret until we had the other.

Young Marcus Townsend insisted on going with us down to Rogers' house again, and the paymaster promised to have friends on hand who would help us in case of need.

Professor James was also called into the consultation, and the poor man was deeply affected on hearing that his wife was around again.

He was determined, however, that justice should be done, and he gave Ajax ten dollars in an envelope to take to her.

That was our excuse for going to the place again that night, while young Marcus Townsend agreed to go with us as a witness.

My brave young friend appeared to be as anxious as I was to see us get out of the scrape, and I could not keep him from running any risk that we may have to face in encountering the old robber.

Ajax and I entered the kitchen, leaving Marcus Townsend out on the street.

Ajax excused himself for coming back by saying that he had message from the professor to Mrs. James.

We were then led into the back room by the cook where found Mrs. James seated as if in deep thought.

Ajax at once offered her the money, saying:

"De professor sent dat, missah."

Before the woman could make a suitable reply, Bob Ferris entered the room as if coming from the floor above.

The young rogue was in a still more maudlin state than when we first saw him, but some one had managed to color his face again so that he had all the appearance of a negro of rity.

On being assured that I had now the real Bob Ferris to deal with, I made up my mind that we would arrest him and the man as well, and yet I did not feel inclined to be too hard on the young fellow after having served him once.

Whether he was engaged in the robbery or not, he could be back to prison as an escaped convict, and I hated to beay him if it could be avoided.

Mrs. James took the money sent to her by her husband, and after informing Ajax that she would go to New York as early possible in the morning, she said to him:

"I want you to tell Professor James for me, if anything happens up here, that I have nothing to do with the man who was once my husband, or with his son either. He will understand what I mean."

Bob Ferris heard the words thus spoken, and he raised his head from the table as he stammered forth:

"Better keep quiet about the old man, old woman, or it will worse for you."

The words were scarcely uttered when the man spoken of entered the room from the back, and Well Rogers followed him.

The young rascal stared at Ajax for a moment in surprise and he cried:

"I thought you went home, old fellow, but I suppose you ave some business here."

"He came back with a message for me," rejoined Mrs. James, and he brought me money that I couldn't get elsewhere."

Ajax then informed Well Rogers that he heard about a chance in the tavern on his way through the village, and that he wanted to see it.

I kept my eye on the interesting stranger, who was still muffled up to the eyes, and I could see that he frowned at Mrs. James before he turned to Bob Ferris, saying:

"Young fellow, you had better turn in for the night, as I don't believe you are able to go to the dance."

The young fellow thus addressed braced himself up a little and replied:

"You can't fool me, old man, and I am bound to go to the dance."

Then we all moved out into the street.

Marcus Townsend came along at the moment, and Well Rogers caught a glimpse of him, as he went up to him, saying:

"Hello, Marcus, and what in the thunder brings you out tonight?"

Marcus smiled in a knowing manner and then replied:

"The same as what brought you out, I suppose, and some of the other fellows."

Just then the muffled stranger caught the real Bob Ferris by the shoulder and shook him roughly as he said to him:

"If you won't go to bed, young fellow, come along and take walk with me and see if I can't wake you up a little."

"All right, old man."

The two then went along the street, and I gave a signal to Ajax to follow them.

Feeling it incumbent on me to take the lion's share of the risk that night, and being anxious to settle matters as soon as possible, I marched on boldly ahead of Ajax as I whispered to him:

"Hold back with Mr. Townsend until you see me set on the old stranger."

I noticed that several strangers approached the spot at the same time, some of whom spoke to Marcus Townsend, and I knew that they were connected with the railroad.

The old stranger and his son walked along arm in arm, and as I drew near them I could hear the old fellow saying in gruff tones:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to go on this way, when you have such good reason for keeping straight, hang your eyes."

I was moving silently along after them in the snow, and I heard the young fellow replying:

"Hang it all, old man, it ain't right to let that young fellow suffer after he served me such a good turn that night."

I laid my hand on the old fellow's shoulder at the moment and presented a revolver in his face, as I said to him in gruff tones:

"Mr. Ferris, you are my prisoner."

The old fellow started as if he had received a galvanic shock, and I could see my father's angry eyes glaring out at me from under the felt hat, as he replied:

"My name ain't Ferris. Who are you, and what in the mischief do you want with me?"

"I am a detective from New York, and I want you for highway robbery."

The man struck out at me on the instant, while Bob took to his heels, crying:

"Look out for yourself, old man."

The blow aimed at me did not reach me, as Ajax stepped up at the moment and warded it off, and he then grabbed the old fellow by both hands, as he yelled:

"In at him, fellows."

The muffled stranger fought like a tiger as we closed on him and bore him to the ground, but it was lucky for us that he could not draw a weapon before we had him secured.

The moment we had him secured four of the men from the railroad came up, and Marcus Townsend addressed them, saying:

"Get this fellow away, friends, as I want to be after the other fellow with my friend."

I had already started out to run down Bob Ferris, who was making good time in the snow.

I made better time still, however, and I was close on him when he stumbled and fell in a snow pile.

Marcus and I then dragged him out and secured him, as he grumbled forth:

"What in the thunder do you want me for?"

"My name is Dennis Driscoll, and I want you for the robbery that I was arrested for."

The young fellow glared at me as if thoroughly dumfounded, and he then walked quietly back with us as he replied:

"This is a queer move, Dennis, but I'll swear to goodness if I had anything to do with getting you in a scrape, as I have been on the go ever since that night I met you on the road."

"Then who is the other young fellow that looks so much like me?"

The fall in the snow and the surprise appeared to have thoroughly sobered Bob Ferris, as he glared from Marcus Townsend to myself while he replied:

"Now you are giving it to me too strong, and I have got no more to say. But let me ask you one question, young fellow."

"What is that?"

"Didn't I tell you to look out for Well Rogers?"

"What has he got to do with it?" asked Marcus Townsend, as we dragged the prisoner along.

At that moment the old prisoner cried out in a loud voice: "Keep a stiff upper lip, Bob, and don't give any one away."

We couldn't get another word out of either of the prisoners, until we reached the justice of the peace's house, and then maybe they were not both surprised to see that we also secured

the young fellow who was supposed to be on his way to New York at the moment.

I was very eager to get a good look at the old prisoner, and I soon tore the hat and scarf from his head as I cried:

"Let me get a good look at you anyhow."

Each and all of us present did get a good look at him, and then the paymaster was the first to cry out:

"What a fool I have been to accuse honest Dennis Driscoll and his father when this is the old man that robbed me the other night."

"He looks exactly like your father," cried Marcus Townsend, as the brave young fellow clasped my hand in glee.

Daylight was breaking on the affair at last, more especially when it was found that the old prisoner had a large sum of money about him, as well as a breast-pin which the paymaster recognized as his own.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE LIGHT STILL.

The arrest of the three strangers was the talk of the town on the following day, and many people declared that I was a regular hero.

I hastened to my father early on the following morning, and I had a long talk with my mother before going to the jail.

When I told my father about the arrest of the man who resembled him so much I saw that he became fearfully excited, but he didn't say a word to me by way of explanation until we were on our way home.

My father was also released on bail, the paymaster himself offering to go his security.

The three prisoners would not say a word about themselves at first, but Bob Ferris made a sort of a confession on the night after his arrest, and while he was suffering from nervous prostration brought on by his spree.

The young rogue then told Mr. Townsend and the justice of the peace in my presence that the old rogue was his father, and that the young fellow first arrested by us was his twin brother.

The three prisoners were soon recognized by two officers from New York as famous criminals in that city, and the old man had traveled under several names.

Bob Ferris could not or would not implicate young Well Rogers in the robbery, nor would he admit that his father and brother had anything to do with it, while he did say in answer to a question:

"The night I struck this village after my escape from prison I got on a spree, which I have been on ever since. I didn't have anything to do with the robbery, and I couldn't tell who had."

Well Rogers saw fit to clear out of the village early on the following morning, and it was whispered about that he was afraid of the prisoners blowing on him.

When my father and the old prisoner were brought face to face I saw that they both turned pale as death, but neither of them said a word at the time.

During the examination, and when the two men stood side by side, it became still more apparent that they bore a remarkable resemblance to each other.

We had a little rejoicing in our humble home that night, many of the neighbors coming in to congratulate us on our escape.

I could see that my father was very depressed during the whole evening, and I felt in my heart that he had recognized the prisoner as a near relation.

When the neighbors had all retired from our cabin, my father put on his hat and coat and asked me to take a walk with him.

When we reached a spot where nobody could hear us, I could hear him sigh heavily before he said to me:

"My boy, I have something to tell you, and you must keep it a secret forever, even from your mother and sister."

I felt what was coming, and I asked:

"Is it about the prisoner, father?"

"It is, my son. That poor fellow is my own brother, and Heaven forgive him, it is the second time that he has got me into a scrape without his knowing it."

"Can you tell me what happened, sir?"

"I can and I will, and I hope it will be a lesson to you while you live."

My father sighed again, and pressed my hand before he commenced, saying:

"When I was a very young man, living with my father on a small farm in Ireland, I had a brother just one year older than myself, and that was the man you saw to-day.

"I was wild enough, but he was a little worse than I was, as he took to smuggling, and poaching, and other things against the English law.

"It was often remarked then that we looked very much like each other, but we didn't often go round together."

"One night as I was going home from a fair a couple of policemen met me on the road and tried to take me prisoner, swearing that I had recently killed a man near the coast. Knowing that I was innocent, and not thinking of my brother at the time, I became very angry, and set on them with a heavy stick I carried.

"I soon laid one of them senseless, and I gave the other such a beating that he did not recover from it for some time after. Then the hue-and-cry was out after me in earnest, as I had the double charge against me.

"Before I reached my home I began to comprehend that it was my brother who was in the scrape, as he was a smuggler and inclined to be at war with the coastguards.

"As I thought the world of that brother at the time, and as I knew that I was in for it for beating the officers anyhow, I told my father that I was in for two scrapes, and I made off to another part of the country, where I took the name of Driscoll."

"Then that is not your real name, father," I said, in some surprise.

"It is not, my son, but it is the only one you will ever know from me. From the time I left home until the present day, I never saw any of my people again. I married your mother in the strange place and she does not know my real name either."

"What are you going to do now, father?"

"I want you to see the poor fellow on the quiet, and to tell him to keep his mouth shut about my being his brother, as I know he will. Tell him for me, also, to mend his ways hereafter if he gets out of prison again, or I will be sorry that I took his blame on my shoulders long ago in Ireland."

I did manage to see my uncle on the following day, and I gave him my father's message.

He then solemnly assured me that he had never had a day's luck since my father had to fly for his first crime, that he thought that he was dead long years before, and that he would cut off his right hand before he would have him punished again for his crimes.

"But did you not know that some one looking like you was arrested for robbing the paymaster?" I asked.

"To be sure I heard that a man named Driscoll and his son were arrested on the charge, but how could I imagine that it was my own brother and his son, as I didn't think that you were in the land of the living at all and under a false name."

"But you knew that we were innocent, sir," I protested, "and I know that Bob wanted you to spare me, at least, because I gave him a little life the night I met him out on the road."

A savage imprecation burst from the man on the instant and he then replied:

"That's true enough, but I thought that the young fool was asking too much for a stranger, and now see who threw the suspicion on you first. What has young Rogers against you, I would like to know?"

I then told my unfortunate uncle how old Rogers and his son had persecuted us, and how I had retaliated by giving the young rascal a good drubbing.

The prisoner reflected for some moments with an ugly scowl on his brow before he spoke again in gentler tones, as he said to me:

"The scrape I first got into long ago in Ireland made me what I am to-day; but I never turned on a comrade, and I never will. If I ever get out of this scrape I promise you to give the Rogers a dose, and they won't know that it was on your account, either."

"But won't you promise to be a good man, sir, as my father asks you?"

"I will, I will. Tell me about you all, and what you are going to do."

I then told him that my father had made up his mind to go West, as he did not care to remain in a place where we had been twice accused of robbery.

I tried to get out of him if young Rogers was criminally engaged with him or his son, but he would not give me clear answers on that point.

He admitted that Mrs. James was his wife long ago in New York, that they never lived happily together, and that she gave him up when he was arrested for a burglary which she had reaped the benefit of.

I then told him about my first meeting with Mrs. James in New York city, and how she had hated me when I went to work at the academy.

My uncle then promised to do all in his power toward clearing us, and he kept his word to the very letter and beyond it.

He confessed on his trial that himself and his son James had robbed the paymaster, and that Bob had nothing to do with the affair, as he was on a bad spree at the time, which was also proved by other witnesses.

The old fellow and his son were convicted, but Bob never went back to Sing Sing again as he managed to escape from the county jail on the day after the trial.

The robbery and the arrest brought about through me gave me quite a reputation in the neighborhood, and several of the most influential citizens offered to befriend me.

I declined all offers thus made, but I was compelled to accept the reward offered for the arrest of the real robbers, as I did not want to create suspicion as to our connection by regarding it.

Young Well Rogers did not appear in the village again after that night, and his father sold out his business and went to live in New York soon after.

Mrs. James was not seen in the village again either, and the professor declared that he would not give her any more assistance.

Ajax was a happy man on the day when I presented him with half of the reward given me by the railroad company, while the good fellow protested that he did not earn any of it, and that I was entitled to the fame and the money for the manner in which I set about capturing the robbers.

Edna James was delighted at my second triumph and vindication, but she was very much mortified when it leaked out that her step-mother was mixed up with the robbers again.

She soon induced her father to sell out the academy, when they both moved out West together, and they settled in a village near where my folks resided.

Let it not be supposed that my career thereafter was an easy one, as I had still plenty to do in fighting the battle of life, although I had good friends to back me.

I remained at the academy after it changed hands, and I still kept on working for Mr. Townsend.

At the end of two years I graduated from the institution,

and at about the same time the Townsends moved to New York city, where the old gentleman opened another law office.

I went with him as his clerk, and I then entered a law school to finish myself for the profession.

From the very night when I had last seen Well Rogers in the village I felt assured that we would meet again at no distant day.

I was also assured that the young rascal was criminally connected with my uncle and cousins, and it would come out some day, when we would fight the last battle that was ever to be fought between us.

CHAPTER XVII.

SQUARING UP ACCOUNTS.

My father succeeded admirably on a farm he purchased in the West, not a great many miles from the city of Chicago, and there my sister bloomed into womanhood.

Mary worked hard and studied harder, and when she was twenty she was the pride of us all, and very much admired by the young men in the neighborhood.

Young Marcus Townsend became a full-fledged lawyer about one year before I did, and he then went away to settle in Chicago, where a good opening was presented for him through his father.

I remained with the old gentleman in New York city for about a year after I was admitted to the bar, but I must say that I did not get many clients on my own account in the over-crowded city.

Mr. Townsend became anxious to join his son in the West, and Marcus urged me to go on also, offering to take me into partnership in his ever-increasing business.

I accepted the generous offer, and I hastened out West with old Mr. Townsend, who then made up his mind to retire from active business.

Marcus and myself prospered very well at first, but we soon met with some reverses by engaging in land speculations, and we had to commence the world over again, as we both declined to receive aid in money from the good old lawyer.

In the meantime I was informed that Marcus and my sister had become deeply attached to each other, and when we were succeeding again Mary became the wife of my dear friend and partner.

After arriving in the West I often met Edna James at my father's house, as that young lady was Mary's confidential friend.

Edna was the same kind-hearted creature as ever, and she assisted in supporting her old father, who had become almost a wreck.

When I saw my way clear toward making a good business again, and when we had paid the debts which we had formed by our failure in the land speculation, I asked Edna James to become my wife, and she readily consented.

Some five years after Edna became my wife she came to the office one day in a very excited manner and said to me:

"My wicked step-mother has just been to the house, and she is troubling father."

The old professor was living with us ever since our marriage, and he had a great terror of ever seeing his former wife again.

I endeavored to calm my wife, and to assure her that I would soon dispose of the troublesome old woman.

On the following day a handsome gentleman about my own age, wearing a full dark beard, entered the office and requested a private interview with me.

I granted the request on the instant, as there was something in the tones of the man's voice that had attracted me toward him.

"Mr. Driscoll, do you not recognize me?"

Drawing back a little coldly, I replied:

"I think I do recognize you, sir, and I would like to know what you want with me?"

A proud flush overspread the stranger's face, and he drew himself up as he replied:

"I would like you to understand, Mr. Driscoll, that I am not the same kind of a person you knew when you were living in Middleville. Are you certain that you know me without any mistake?"

"I am certain that you are the person I once knew as Bob Ferris."

The stranger smiled again, and he then went on, saying in manly tones:

"No; I am the person you knew as Bob Ferris, but I would like you to understand that I have led an honest life ever since I escaped from the county jail that night. I have been out in California, where I have made a great deal of money in the mines, and I am here now on a little business."

"I am glad to hear that you have led an honest life," I replied.

"Yes, I have," he repeated, "and I must thank you for putting me in the way of doing it."

"What has become of your father and brother?"

A dark frown appeared on the handsome face of the man as he replied:

"It is about them that I came to see you, and I want to tell you at once that they have got into trouble here in this city."

I shrugged my shoulders a little, saying:

"I hope you didn't come to me to defend them."

"I did. My father and brother have been only out of the New York prison three months. They came out here to try and lead new lives, when they again fell in with some old associates, who have got them into a bad scrape."

Something struck me at the moment that Mrs. James was one of the old friends alluded to, and I inquired:

"Did I know the people who got your father and brother into this trouble?"

"You did. They were both enemies of yours, and I am certain that they hate you still. I don't want to appear in this business, but I want you to take up the case of my father and brother as against Well Rogers and a woman known as Mrs. James."

I became interested in the case on the instant, and I candidly told my cousin that I would undertake the defense of his father and brother.

He then told me that Well Rogers had been connected with the band to which he belonged in New York, and that my young enemy had been living a criminal life ever since.

Mrs. James and Well Rogers had moved to Chicago some time before, where they were also associated with some notorious criminals.

My uncle and his son James did strive to become honest men on arriving in the city, but they had a hard struggle of it, and they were very low down in pocket when they encountered Mrs. James and Well Rogers again.

Well Rogers induced my uncle and his son to undertake a desperate burglary, while he kept in the background himself.

The enterprise was successful as far as Rogers was concerned, as he received several thousand dollars which the others had secured.

They were arrested, however, on suspicion, and they were then imprisoned, while my old enemy declined to aid them in any way.

I meditated for some time, and I then said to him:

"Did Mrs. James have anything to do with the affair you speak of?"

"Yes, she did, as it was her and Well Rogers who planned the robbery, and they received the proceeds, as my father and brother feared that the officers were on their track when they gave up the spoils to them."

After questioning the young man still further, and getting the full particulars of the case from him, I said to him:

"While I am not at all spiteful, I deem that it is my duty to bring Well Rogers to justice, and to settle my old account with him. I will undertake the case, and I will go to work with a heart and a half."

I did enter into the case with a will, as I was most anxious to have a last encounter with Well Rogers.

I also learned from Bob Ferris that old Rogers had been in New York a year before, and that the old fellow had been connected with the criminal gang.

On returning to my home that night I found Mrs. James there before me, and my wife was entertaining the said woman in a civil manner.

The woman was plaguing the life out of the old profligate, and she was striving to force her way into our house as mate for a special purpose of her own.

That purpose was to ruin me, if possible, and to break up our happy home.

After supper was over I quietly summoned a detective, and I then invited the spiteful creature into a private room to have a plain talk.

The woman held her head very high at first and defied me, stating that she knew nothing about Well Rogers or his associates who were then in prison.

The detective I had summoned was engaged in the case during the whole afternoon and evening, and he was well prepared to bring proof enough against the woman to send her to prison for ten years at least.

I will not describe the stormy interview I had with the wicked creature, but I will state that I subdued her at last when I produced the detective to arrest her on a specific charge.

She then made a thorough confession and implored me to forgive her in the most abject manner.

By means of that confession we arrested Well Rogers every night, and secured clear proofs of his guilt at the time.

Mrs. James turned State's evidence against her former associates, and Well Rogers was convicted for crimes in which my uncle and his sons had no connection.

I must confess that I did not pity the rascal when he received a heavy sentence, as I had good reason to know that he was aiming to strike at me again as soon as possible.

I will also confess that I used my best exertions in getting my uncle and his son free, and as the proof was very strong against them they were soon set at liberty.

Father and son soon left for California with the released rascal, who had reformed in earnest, and I am glad to say that they led honest lives thereafter.

I did not tell my father a word about my new adventure with his relatives, or that I succeeded in punishing my old enemy, Well Rogers.

Mrs. James died soon after, and my wife tended to her until she breathed her last.

The old professor lingered on for some time, and even to his dying day he was in terror of the woman who had gone before him.

I continued to lead a happy and prosperous life, but I could never forget my early struggles and the kind friends who helped me along in life.

Marcus Townsend and myself continue fast friends in declining years, and our wives and children have never had reason to be ashamed of us.

My father lived to a good old age, and he often declared that he was proud of his only son, but he would never tell me his real name, although I often requested that he would do so.

For my experience in this great land of ours, I am certain that the road to fame and fortune is open to all who pursue with perseverance, industry, and honor, and thousands of thousands can boast of the same experience as THE POOR BOY.

THE END.

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